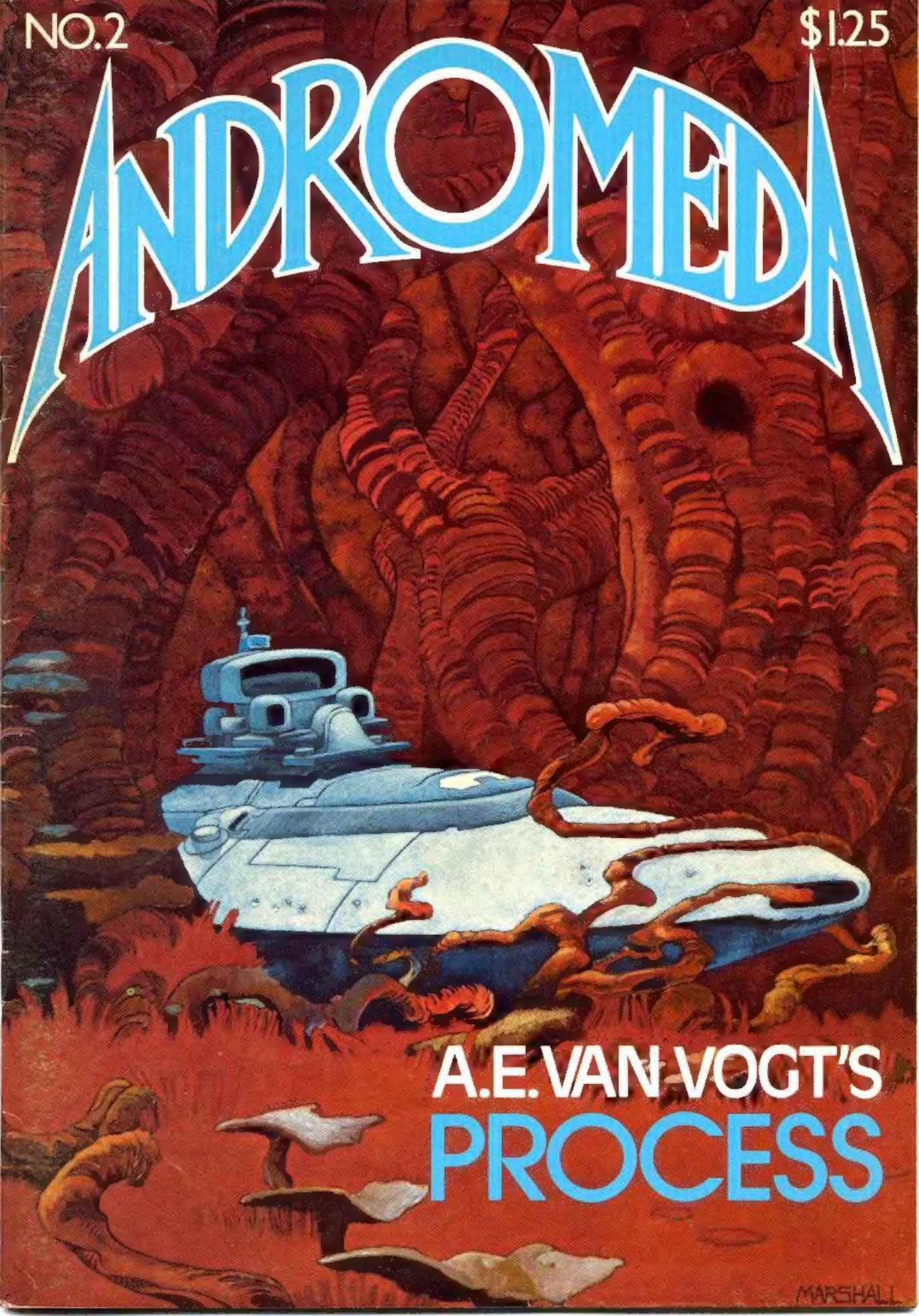
NO.2

$1.25

ANDROMEDA



A.E. VAN VOGT'S PROCESS

MARSHALL

Below you'll find a quick rundown of the second issue of *ANDROMEDA*. Media response and sales of number one have been excellent. It looks as if we are here to stay.

Waiting in the wings for future issues you'll find ARTHUR C. CLARKE, JACK VANCE, HARLAN ELLISON, PHILIP JOSE FARMER, WALTER M. MILLER, WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON, and ALAN DEAN FOSTER.

Finally, special thanks go to JOHN KOEHLER, GEORGE OLSHEVSKY, FORREST J. ACKERMAN, KATHY, CHRISTINE and the folks at FIREFLY.

PROCESS by A. E. Van Vogt, illustrated by Dean Motter 2
It was a most unusual pleasure to illustrate a story as thought-provoking as this one by A. E. Van Vogt. I think I enjoyed it even more than last issue's Moebius pastiche, *JEANNE D'ARC*. Van Vogt, of course, is the reknowned author of *THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER*, *SLAN*, and *THE UNIVERSE MAKERS*. Canadian-born, he now makes his home in Hollywood. Be prepared for some surprises.

THE HIDDEN DIARIES by Jeffrey Morgan, illustrated by Ken Steacy 18
Welcome to the fold two more people to whom *ANDROMEDA* owes its existence. The enthusiasm and psychic support lent by Ken and Jeffrey during this magazine's embryonic period saw it safely through a number of near abortions. In addition, they produced this marvelous and powerful narrative poem. You may know Ken through our efforts at *STAR REACH*. Jeffrey Morgan has written material for *CREEM* and *ROLLING STONE* as well as editing *STAGELIFE* and *ROXY* magazines.

SHAWN OF THE RUINS by George Henderson, illustrated by Gene Day and Jim Beveridge 21
From the ashes of the late, lamented *ORB* magazine comes this remarkable little tale. It is authored by the infamous George Henderson of the Vast Whizzbang Organization, proprietor of Memory Lane as well as a writer for *ORB* and a number of Warren magazines. Gene Day has been particularly conspicuous of late, appearing in *STAR REACH* and *GASM*, as well as in his own *STAR WARS* portfolio. A special thanks must be extended to *ORB* editor Jim Warey for making this story available to us.

DARK SIDE OF THE MOON by Tom Nesbitt and Nick Poliwko 39
Tom and Nick are alumni of Sheridan College's comic book illustration course. You'll be seeing a lot more from these boys in these pages. When last observed, there was nothing to speak of on the moon—or is there something we don't know about?

DEAN MOTTER

ANDROMEDA Vol. 2, No. 2 June 1978. Published by Andromeda Publications, owned and operated by Silver Snail Comics, Ltd., 321 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2A9. Dean Motter and Ron Van Leeuwen, associate editors. Cover © 1978 Don Marshall. Frontispiece © 1978 Robert MacIntyre. Process © 1978 A. E. Van Vogt, used with the kind permission of his agent Forrest J. Ackerman. Illustration © 1978 Iconoclast Imageworks. The Hidden Diaries © 1978 Main Artery/Triskellion and Ken Steacy. Shawn of the Ruins © 1978 Controlled Chaos. Dark Side of the Moon © 1978 Nesbitt and Poliwko. Back cover © 1978 Iconoclast Imageworks. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Founding publisher: Bill Paul. Distributed by Firefly Books, 2 Essex Avenue, Unit 5, Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. Printed in Canada.

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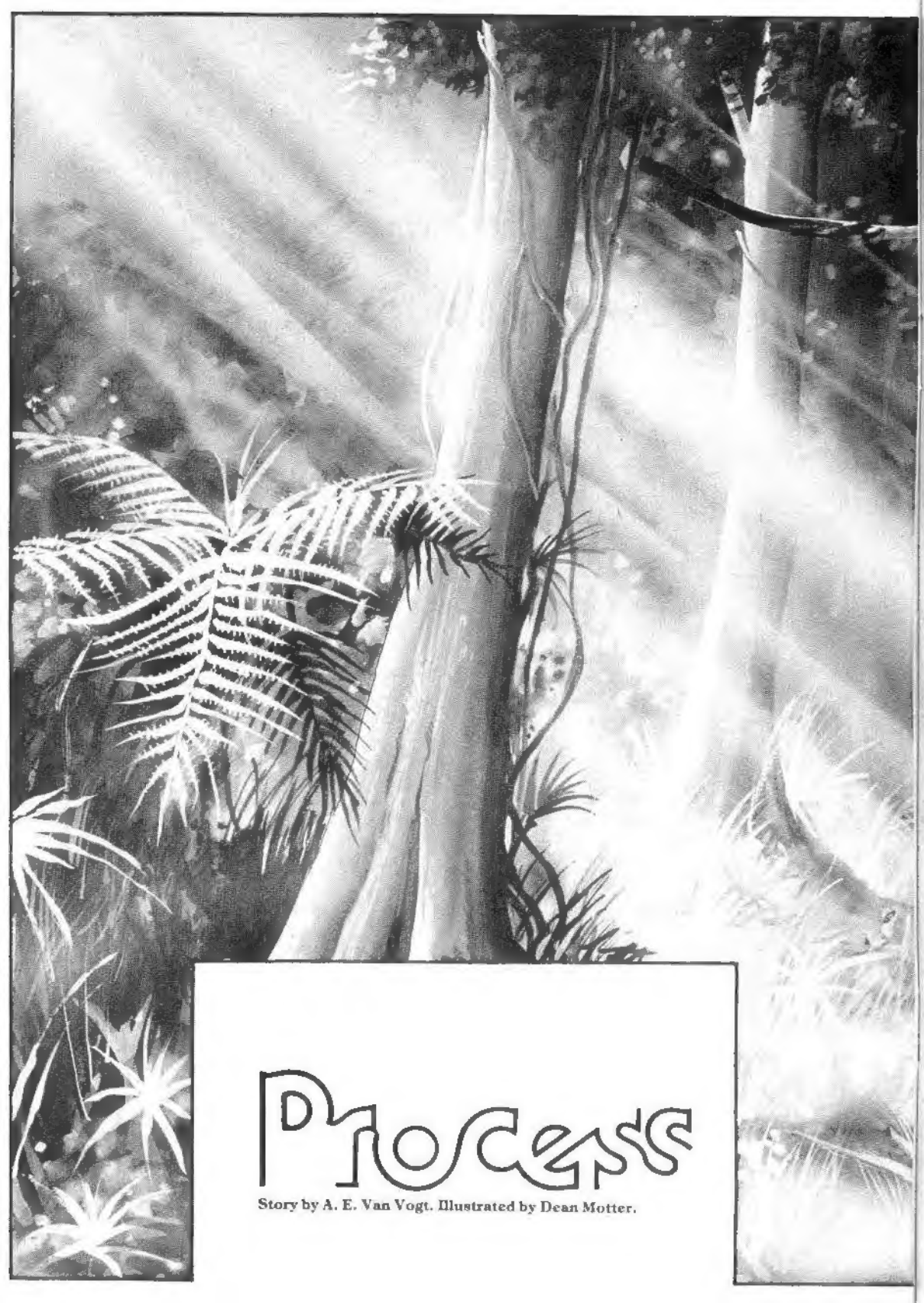
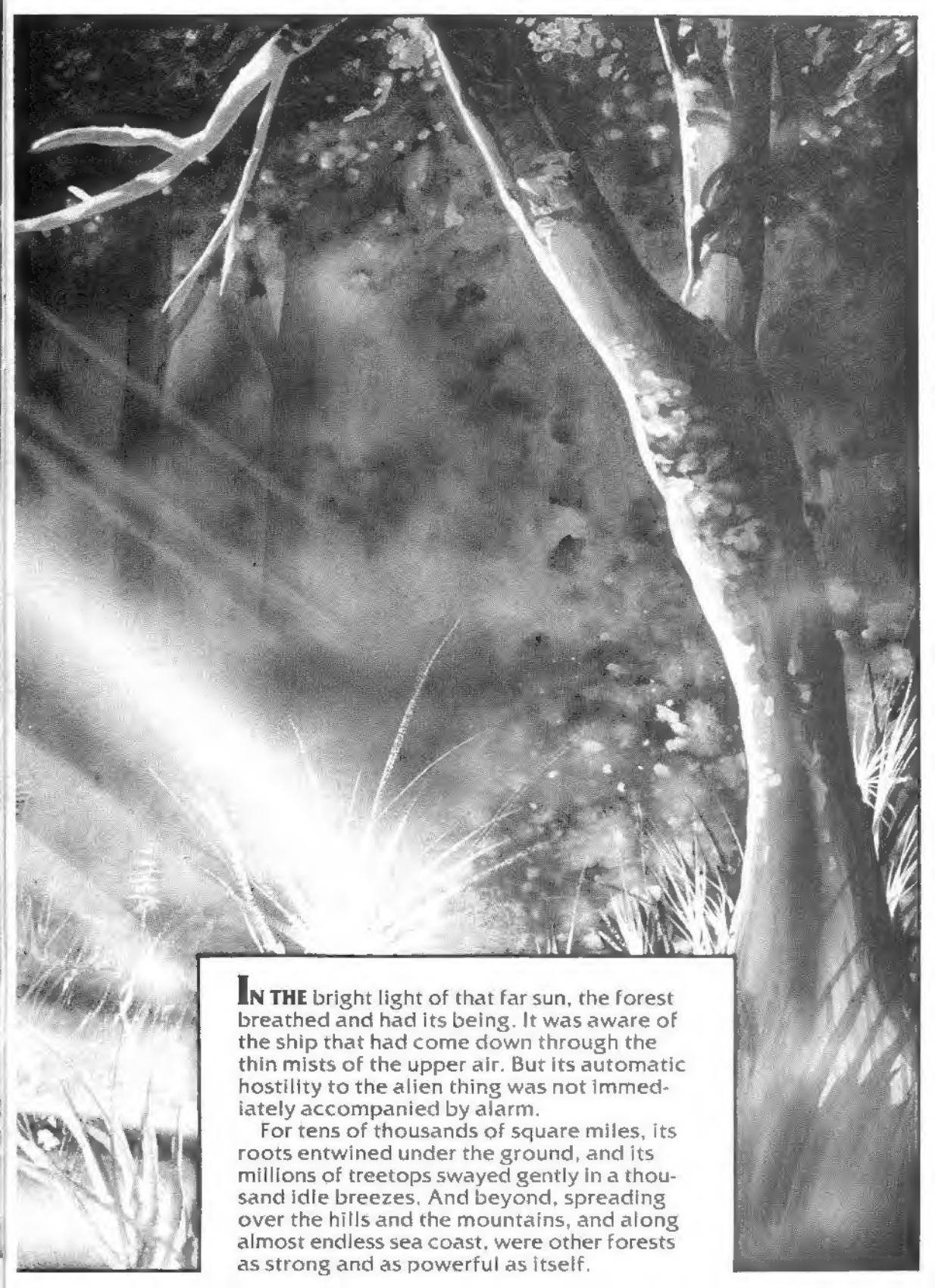
Back Cover by Dean Motter



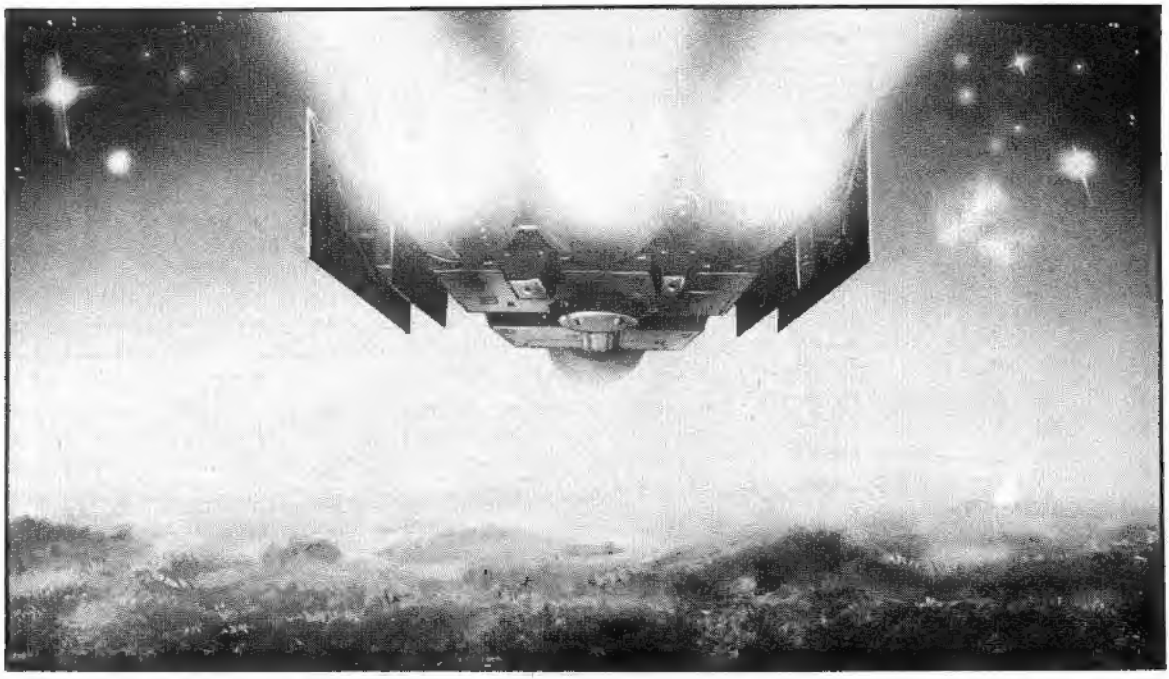
Process

Story by A. E. Van Vogt. Illustrated by Dean Motter.



IN THE bright light of that far sun, the forest breathed and had its being. It was aware of the ship that had come down through the thin mists of the upper air. But its automatic hostility to the alien thing was not immediately accompanied by alarm.

For tens of thousands of square miles, its roots entwined under the ground, and its millions of treetops swayed gently in a thousand idle breezes. And beyond, spreading over the hills and the mountains, and along almost endless sea coast, were other forests as strong and as powerful as itself.

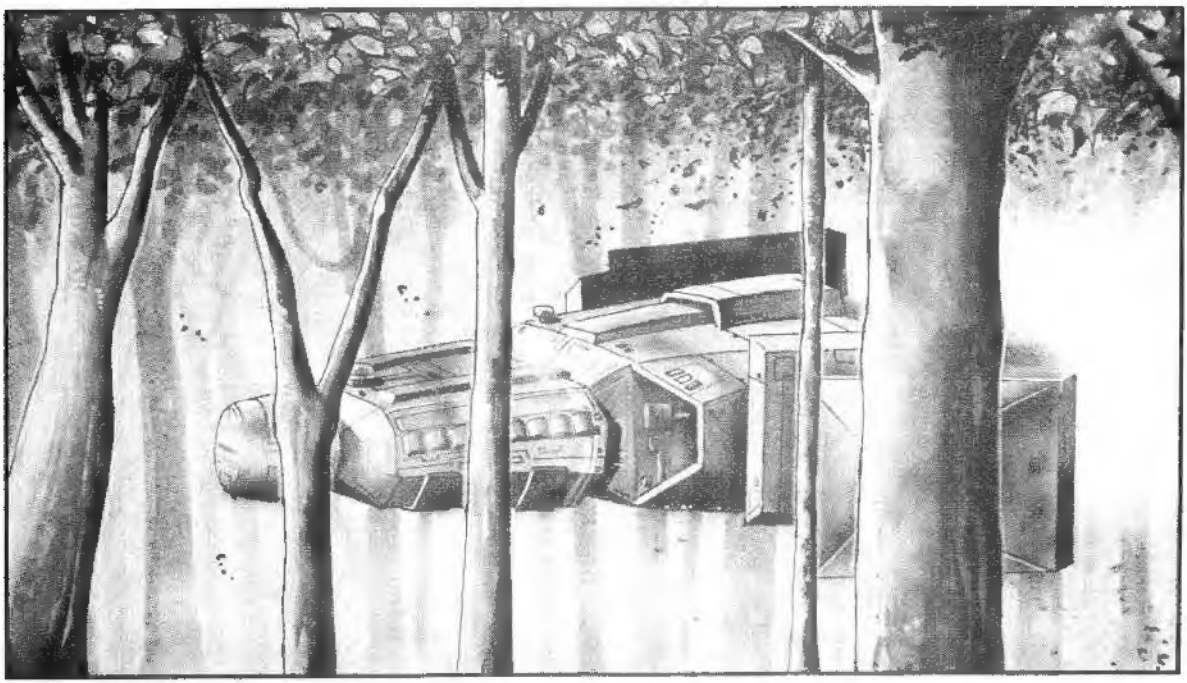


From time immemorial the forest had guarded the land from a dimly understood danger. What that danger was it began now slowly to remember. It was from ships like this, that descended from the sky. The forest could not recall clearly how it had defended itself in the past, but it did remember tensely that defense had been necessary.

It had not long to wait.

The vastness of that tremor, affecting as it did all the trees, gradually created a sound and a pressure. At first it was almost impalpable, like a breeze wafting through an evergreen glen. But it grew stronger.

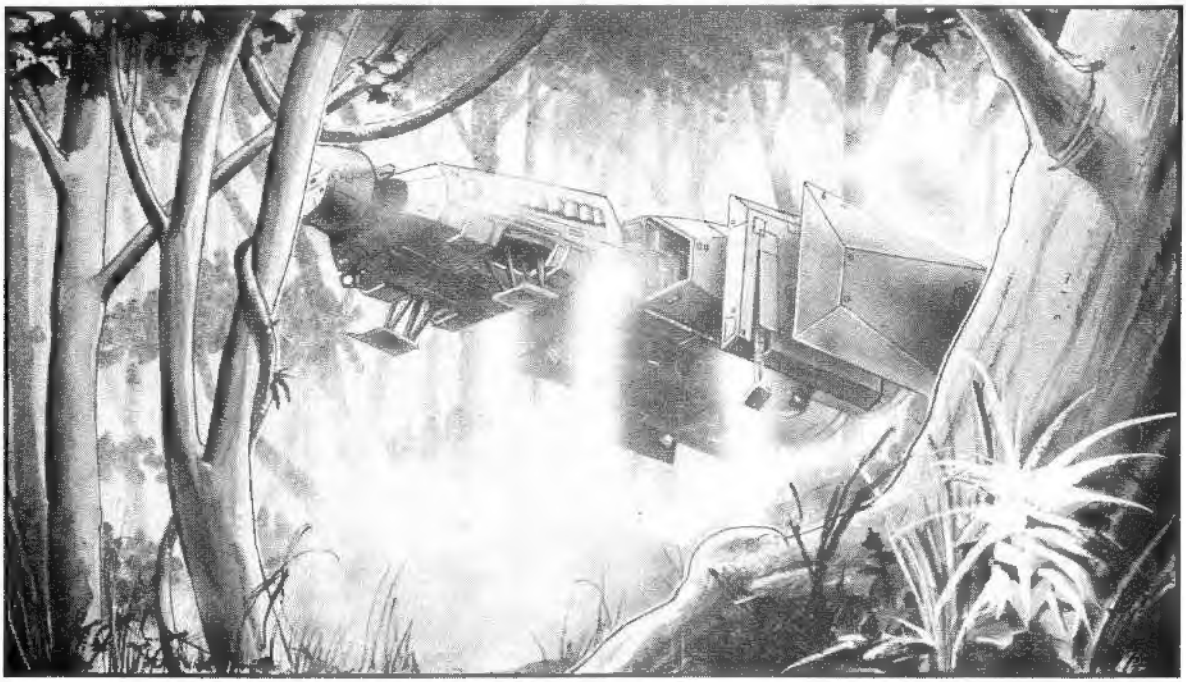
It acquired substance. The sound became all-enveloping. And the whole forest stood there vibrating its hostility, waiting for the thing in the sky to come nearer.

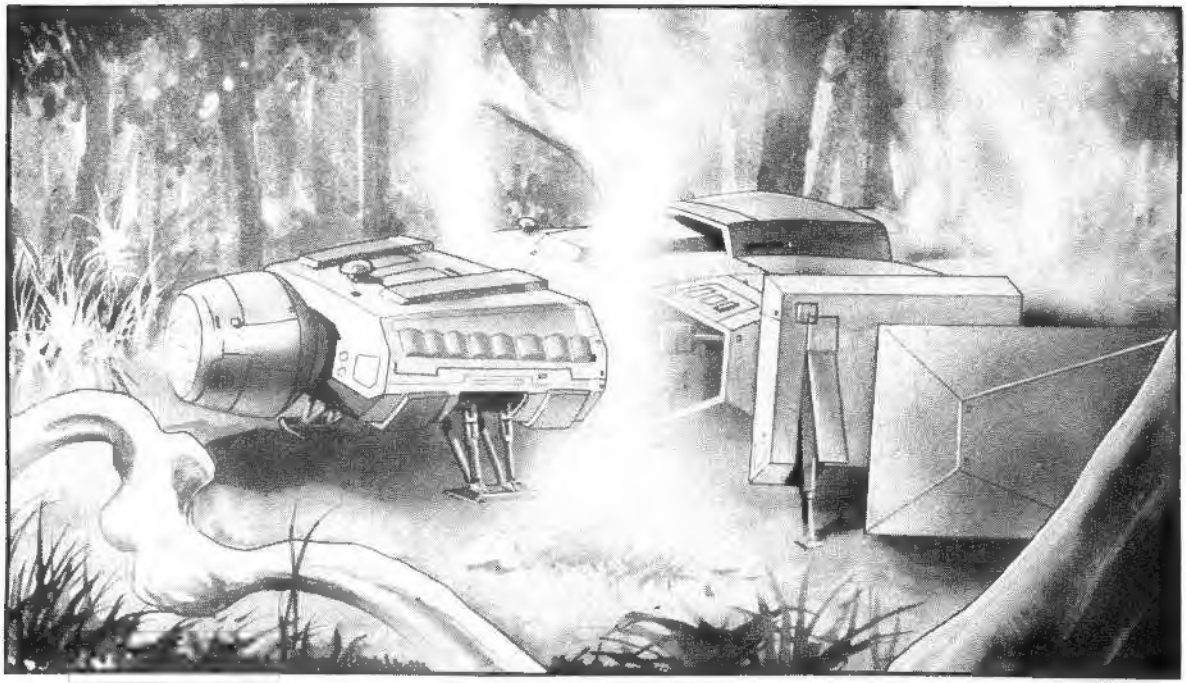


Down came the ship, cutting its own path through a forest that groaned and shrieked with its passage. It settled heavily into the ground two miles after it first touched a tree. Behind, the swath of broken trees quivered and pulsed in the light of the sun, a straight path of destruction which—the forest suddenly remembered—was exactly what had happened in the past.

It began to pull clear of the anguished parts. It drew out its juices, and ceased vibrating in the affected areas. Later, it would send new growth to replace what had been destroyed, but now it accepted the partial death it had suffered. It knew fear.

It was a fear tinged with anger. It felt the ship lying on crushed trees, on a part of itself that was not yet dead.



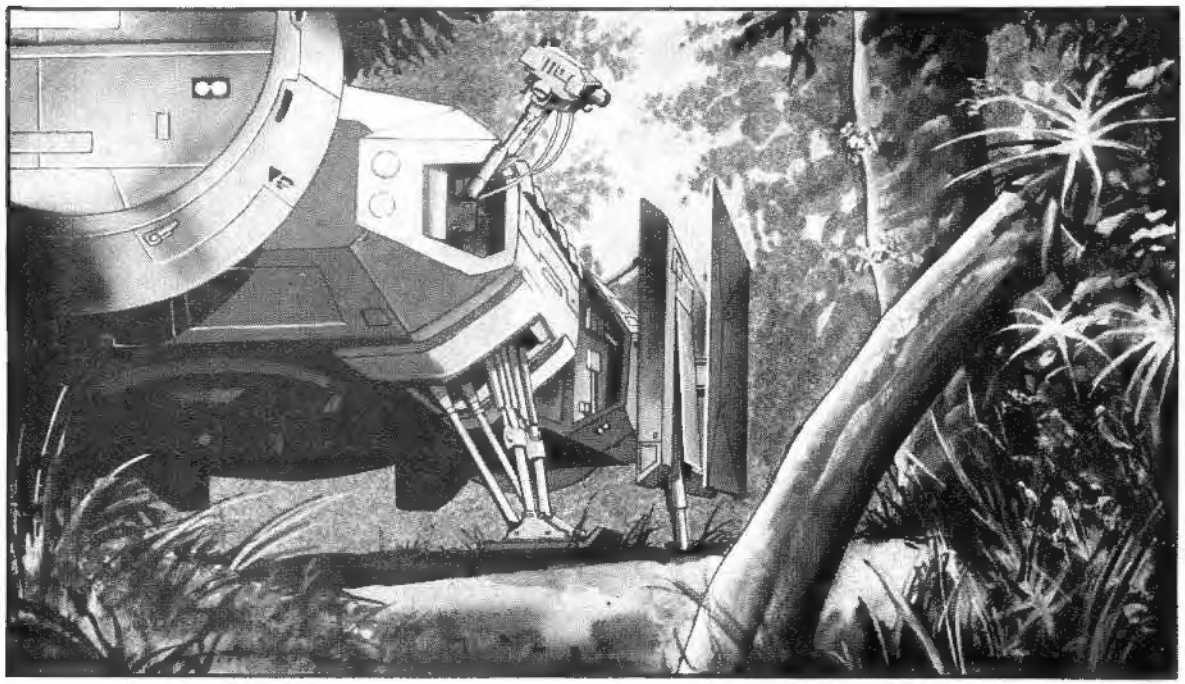


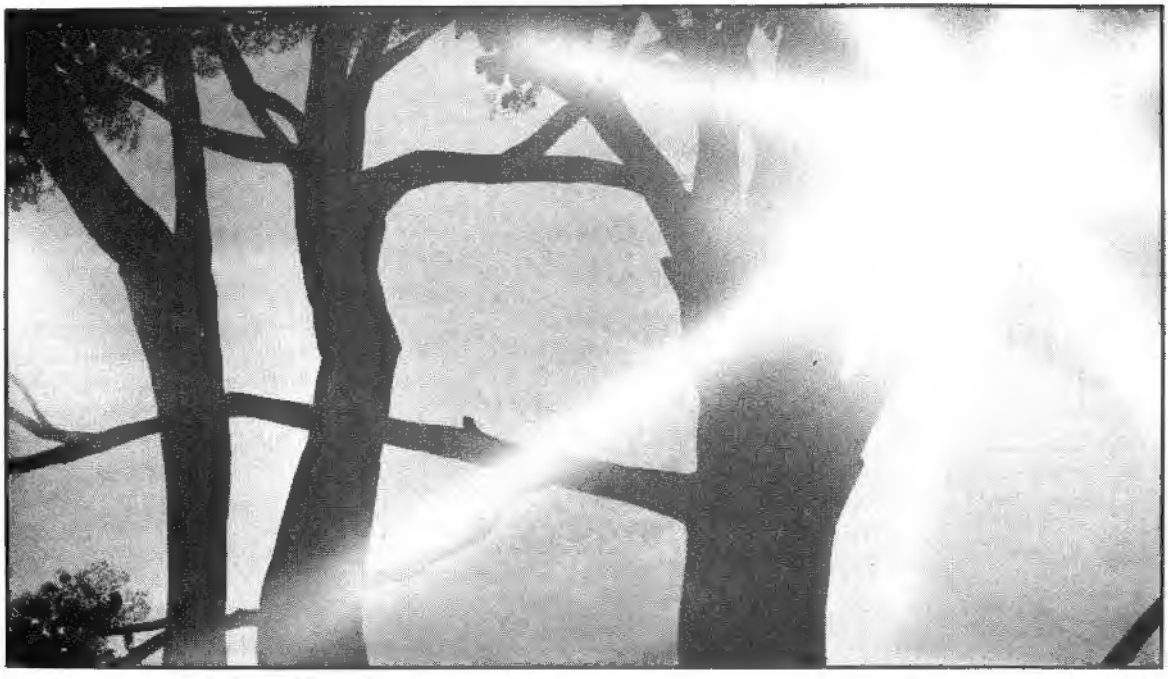
A whisper of thought pulsed along the vibration channels. *Wait*, it said, *there is a memory in me. A memory of long ago when other such ships as this came.*

The memory refused to clarify. Tense but uncertain, the forest prepared to make its first attack. It began to grow around the ship.

Long ago it had discovered the power of growth that was possible to it. There was a time when it had not been as large as it was now. And then, one day, it became aware that it was coming near another forest like itself.

The two masses of growing wood approached each other warily, slowly, in amazement, in a startled but cautious wonder that a similar life form should actually have existed all this time. Approached, touched—and fought for years.

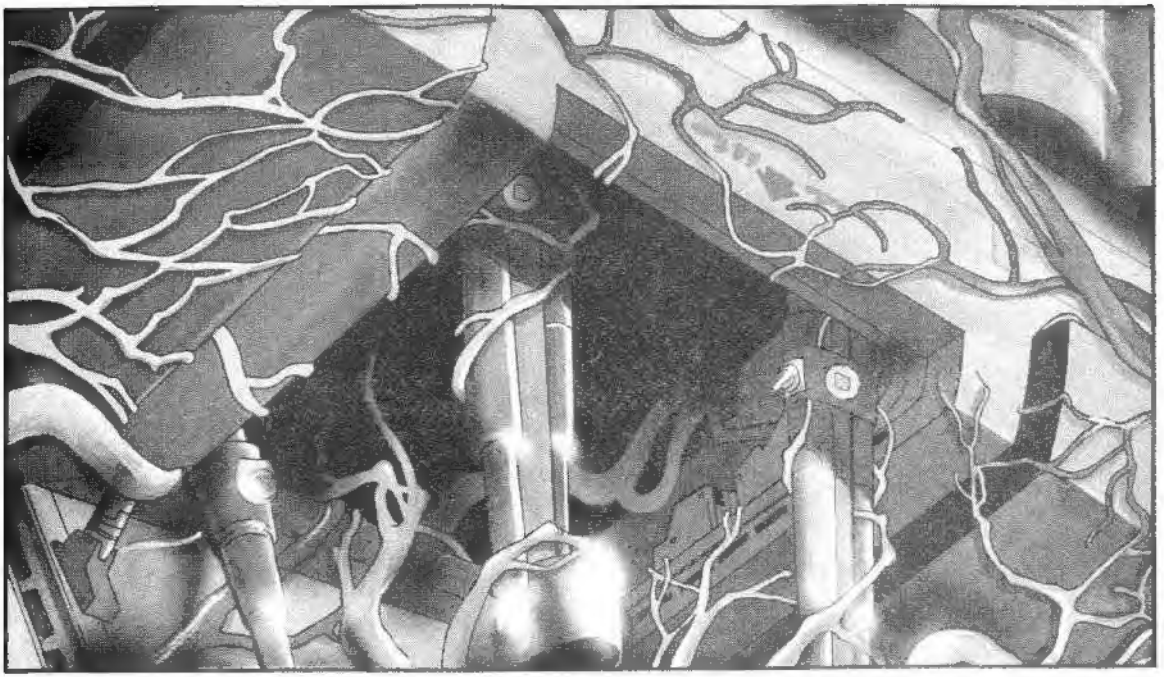




During that prolonged struggle nearly all growth in the central portions stopped. Trees ceased to develop new branches. The leaves, by necessity, grew hardier, and performed their functions for much longer periods. Roots developed slowly. The entire available strength of the forest was concentrated in the processes of defense and attack.

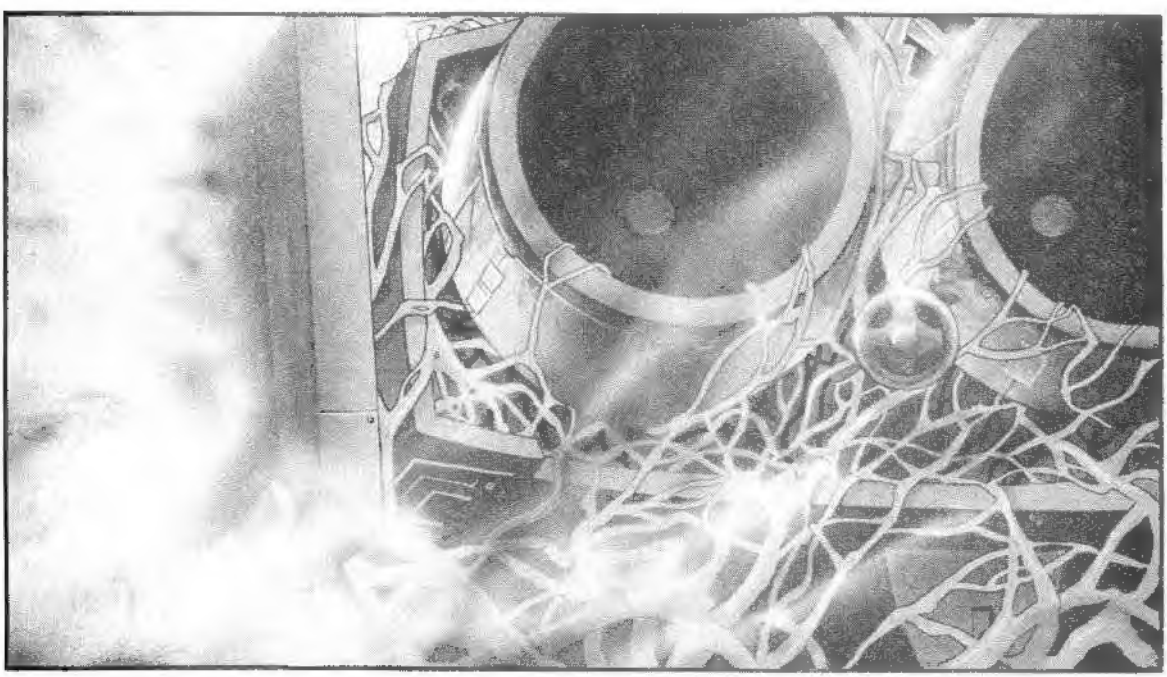
Walls of trees sprang up overnight. Enormous roots tunneled into the ground for miles straight down, breaking through rock and metal, building a barrier of living wood against the encroaching growth of the strange forest. The forest accepted the obstacle created by its enemy.

The limits of demarcation became as natural as the great salt sea to the south, or the icy cold of mountaintops that were frozen the year round.



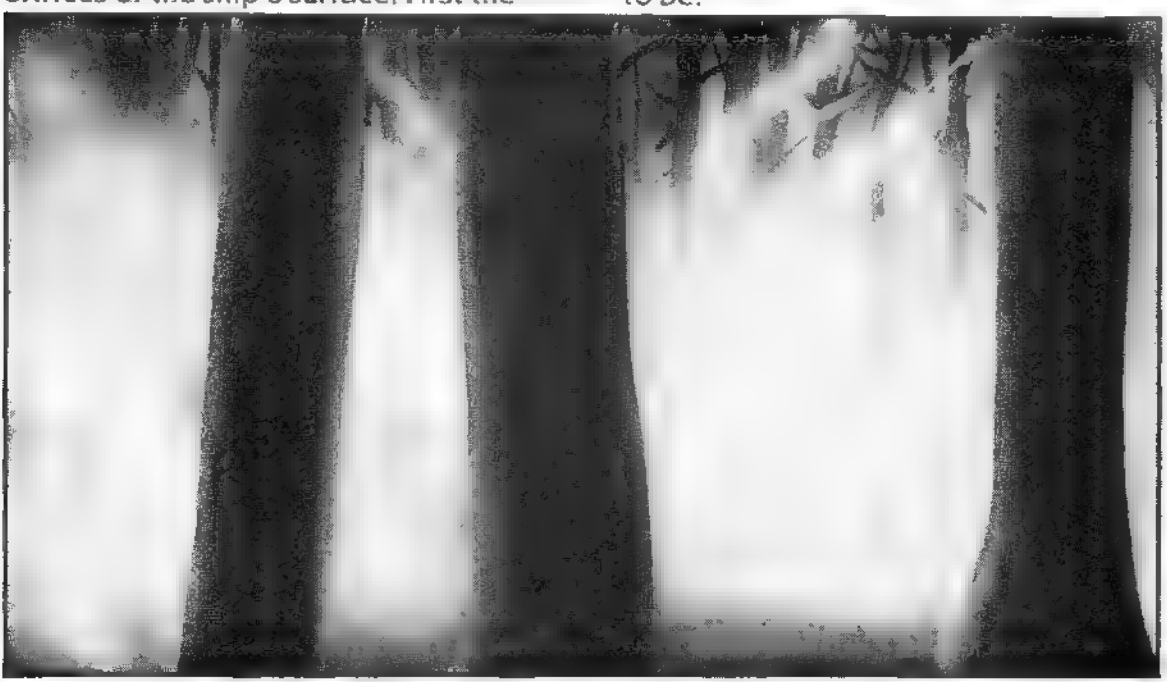
As it had in battle with the other forest, *the* forest concentrated its entire strength against the encroaching ship. Trees shot up at the rate of a foot every few minutes. Creepers climbed the trees, and flung themselves over the top of the vessel. The countless strands of it raced over the metal, and then twined themselves around the trees on the far side. The roots of those trees dug deeper into the ground, and anchored in rock strata heavier than any ship ever built. The tree boles thickened, and the creepers widened till they were enormous cables.

As the light of that first day faded into twilight, the ship was buried under thousands of tons of wood, and hidden in foliage so thick that nothing of it was visible.



It was at that time, almost as if it had been waiting for this stage, that the ship took counteraction. The metal grew warm, then hot, and then cherry red. That was all that was needed. The tiny roots shriveled, and died. The larger roots near the metal burned slowly as the searing heat reached them.

Above the surface, other violence began. Flame darted from a hundred orifices of the ship's surface. First the creepers, then the trees began to burn. It was no flare-up of uncontrollable fire, no fierce conflagration leaping from tree to tree in irresistible fury. Long ago, the forest had learned to control fires started by lightning or spontaneous combustion. It was a matter of sending sap to the affected area. The greener the tree, the more sap that permeated it, then the hotter the fire would have to be.



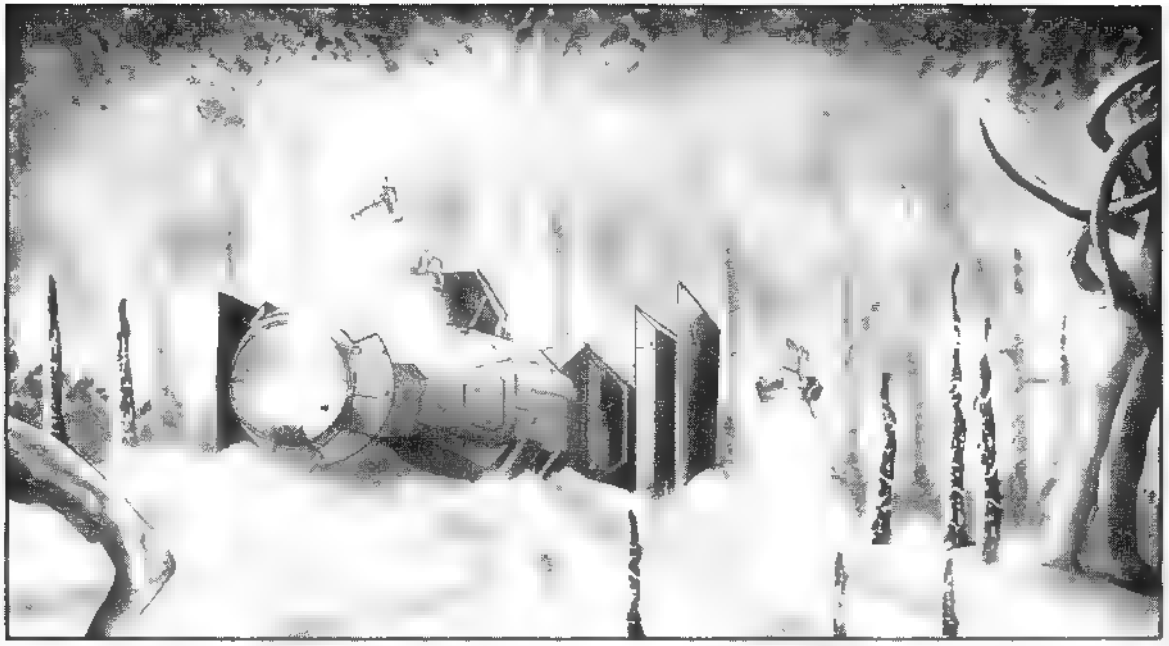
The forest could not immediately remember ever having encountered a fire that could make inroads against a line of trees that oozed a sticky wetness from every crevice of their bark.

But this fire could. It was different. It was not only flame; it was energy.

The fact at last brought the associational memory to the forest. It was a sharp and unmistakable remembrance of what it had done long ago to rid itself and its planet of a ship like this.

It began to withdraw from the vicinity of the ship.

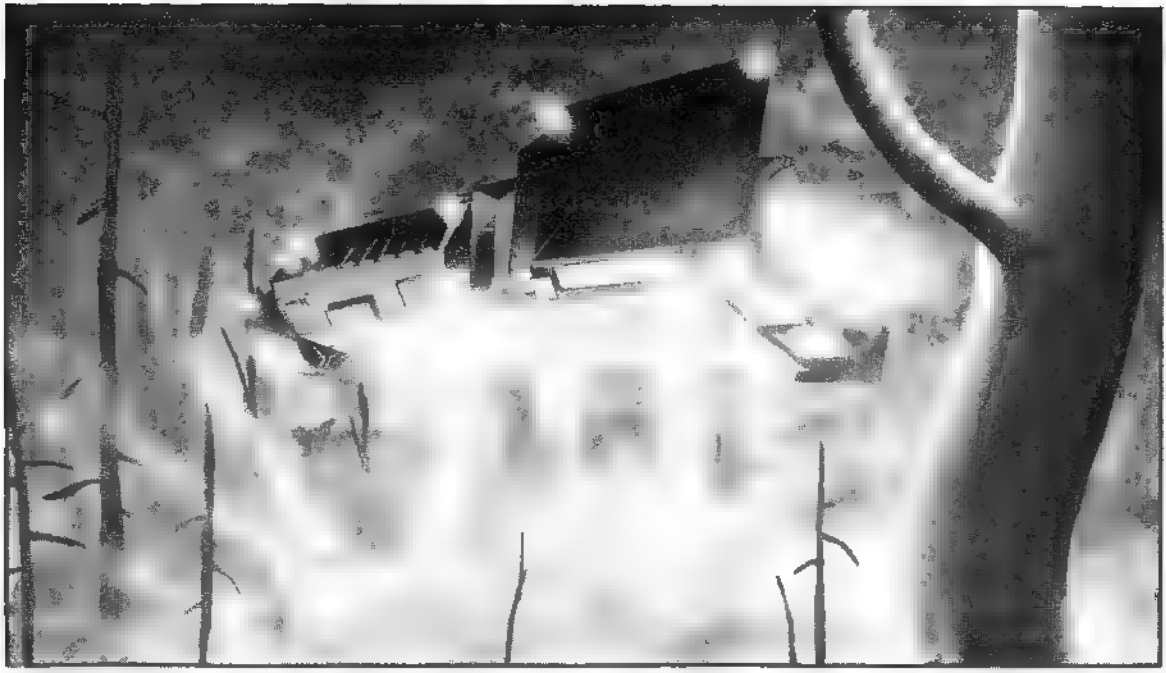
Tens of thousands of roots grew toward rock and soil formations that they had carefully avoided since the last ship had come. In spite of the need for haste, the process itself was slow. Tiny roots, quivering with unpleasant anticipation, forced themselves into the remote, buried ore beds, and by an intricate process of osmosis drew grains of pure metal from the impure stuff.



The grains were small enough to be borne along, suspended in sap, through larger roots.

Soon there were thousands of grains moving along the channels, then millions. And, though each was tiny in itself, the soil where they were discharged soon sparked in the light of the dying fire. As the sun of that world reared up over the horizon, the silvery gleam showed a hundred feet wide all around the ship.

It was shortly after noon that the machine showed awareness of what was happening. A dozen hatches opened, and objects floated out of them. They came down to the ground, and began to skim up the silvery stuff with nozzled things that sucked up the fine dust in a steady fashion. They worked with great caution; but an hour before darkness set in again, they had scooped up more than twelve tons of the thinly spread uranium 235.



The first awareness of the situation came to the forest as the roots deep under the ship reported a sudden lessening of pressure. It was several hours before it decided that the enemy had actually been driven off. And several more hours went by before it realized that the uranium dust still on the scene would have to be removed. The rays spread too far afield.

The accident that occurred then took place for a very simple reason. The forest had taken the radioactive substance out of rock. To get rid of it, it need merely put it back into the nearest rock beds, particularly the kind of rock that absorbed the radioactivity. To the forest the situation seemed as obvious as that.

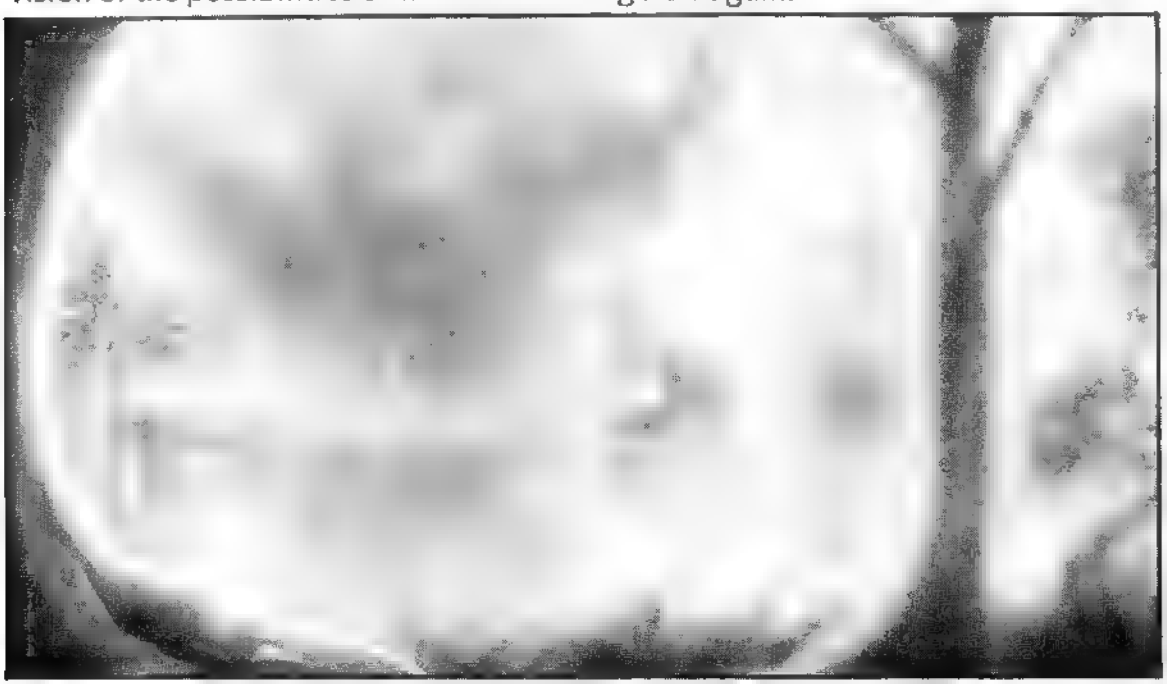
An hour after it began to carry out the plan, the explosion mushroomed toward outer space.

It was vast beyond all the capacity of the forest to understand. It neither saw nor heard that colossal shape of death. What it did experience was enough. A hurricane leveled square miles of trees. The blast of heat and radiation started fires that took hours to put out.

Fear departed slowly, as it remembered that this too had happened before. Sharper by far than the memory was the vision of the possibilities of what had happened , the nature of opportunity.

Shortly after dawn the following morning, it launched its attack. Its victim was the forest which—according to its faulty recollection—had originally invaded its territory.

The enemy, reacting normally, brought up its reserve of sap. When it was fully committed to the gigantic task of growing a new barrier, the bombs started to go off again.



It took months for the forest to grow into the territory of its defeated enemy, to squeeze out the other's dying roots, and to put itself into full possession.

The moment the task was completed, it turned like a fury upon the forest on its other flank

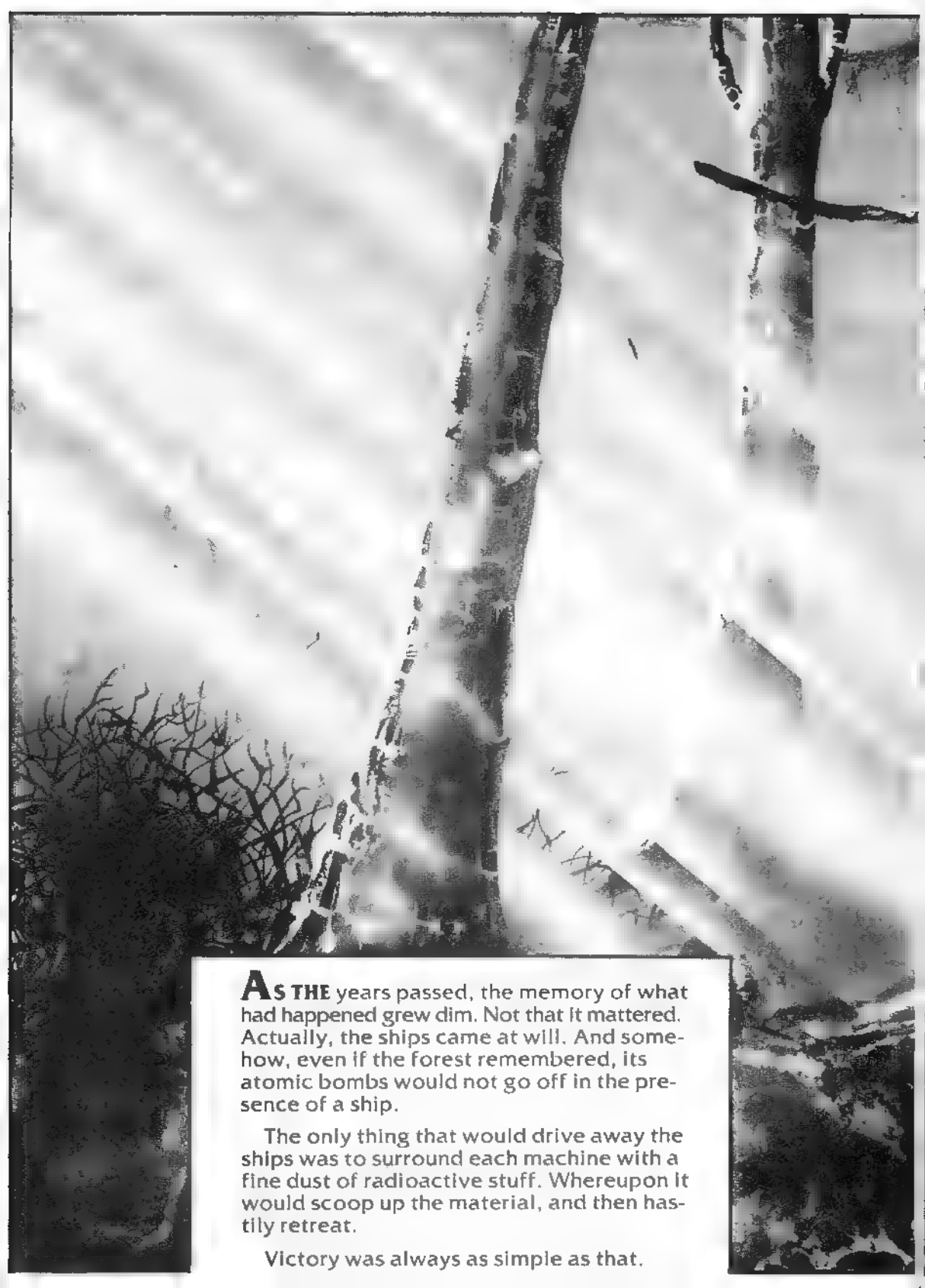
The resulting explosions effortlessly destroyed its main sap supply. And, since it did not understand what was happening, it was lost from that moment.

Once more it attacked with atomic thunder, and with a hail of fire tried to overwhelm its opponent.

It was met by equal force.

For its knowledge had leaked across the barrier of intertwined roots which separated forests.

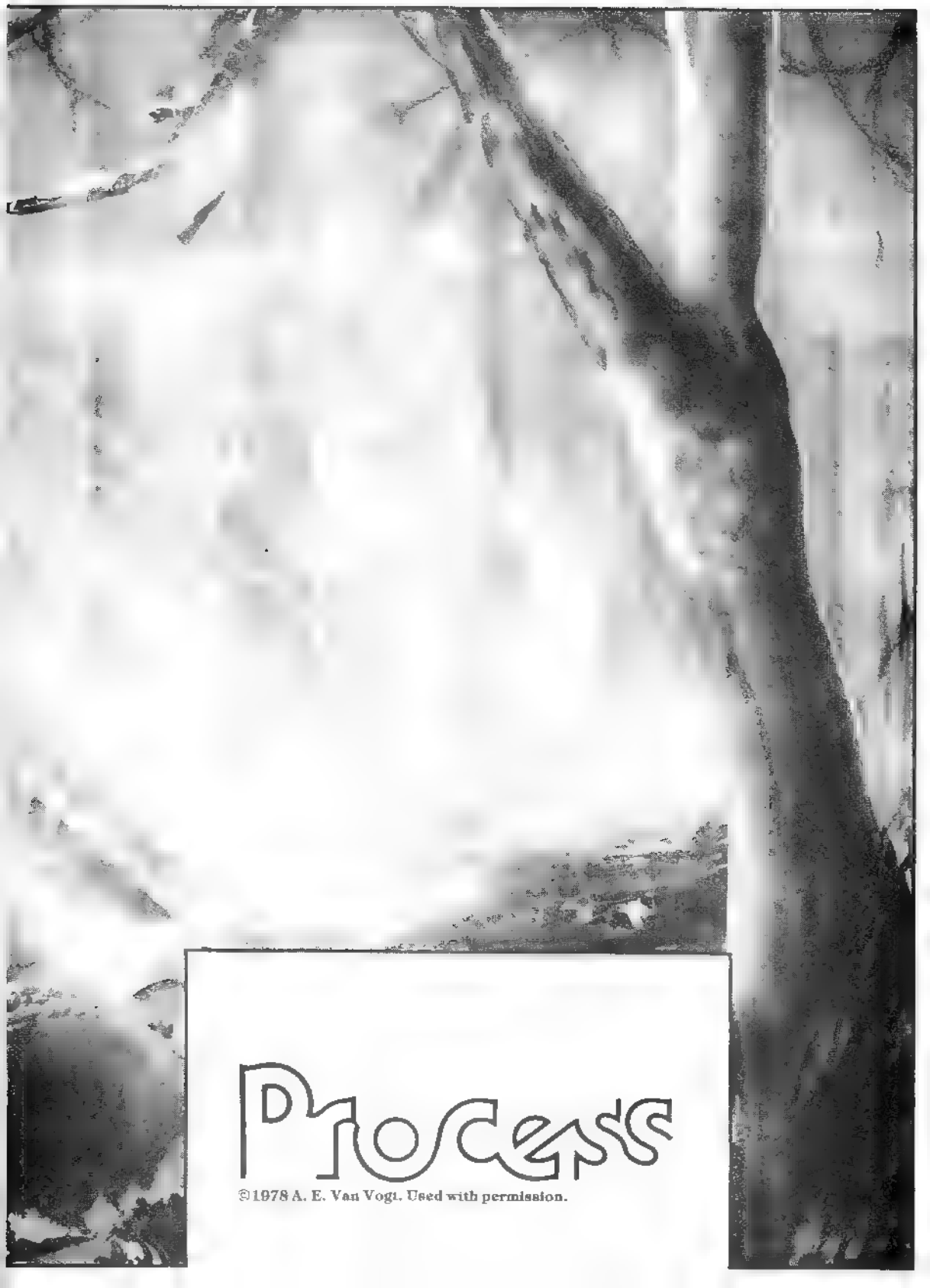
Almost, the two monsters destroyed each other. Each became a remnant, that started the painful process of re-growth.



AS THE years passed, the memory of what had happened grew dim. Not that it mattered. Actually, the ships came at will. And somehow, even if the forest remembered, its atomic bombs would not go off in the presence of a ship.

The only thing that would drive away the ships was to surround each machine with a fine dust of radioactive stuff. Whereupon it would scoop up the material, and then hastily retreat.

Victory was always as simple as that.



Process

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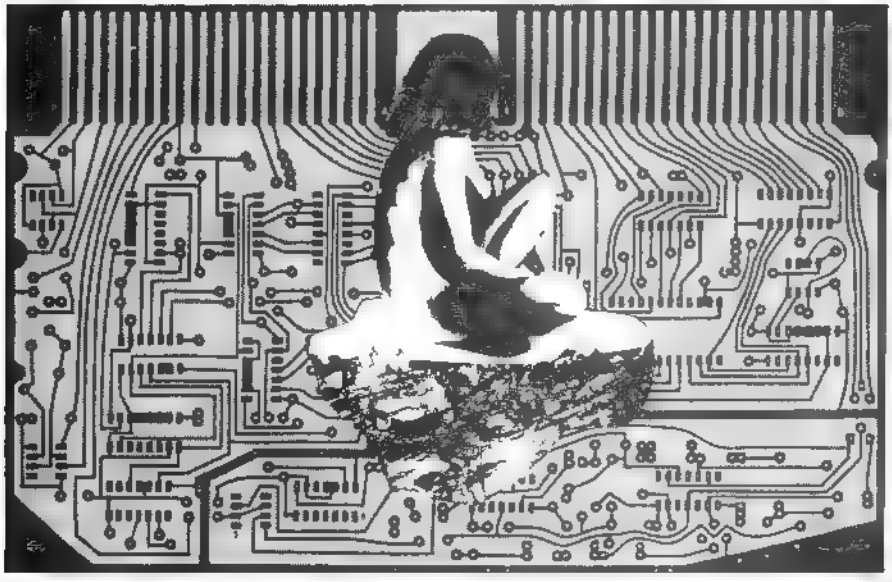
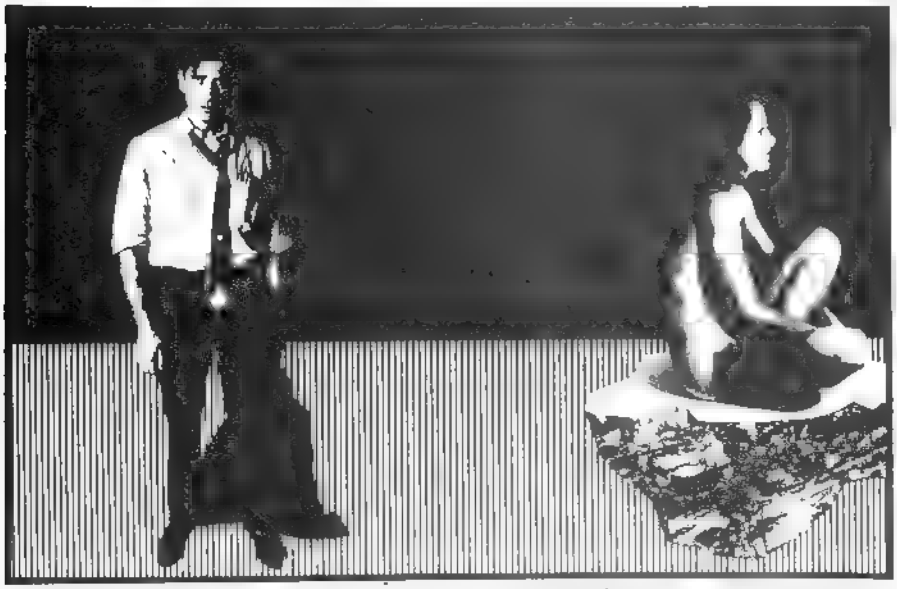
THE
HIDDEN
DIARIES.
VOLUME
ONE/
CHAPTER
ONE:
SHE
CONFRONTS
REALITY
AND
IS
BETRAYED.



Foolish?
Yes.
Failed
to keep
up my end of
the conversation
and look where I
am now: three
weeks late for
dinner and
still at a
loss for
words.

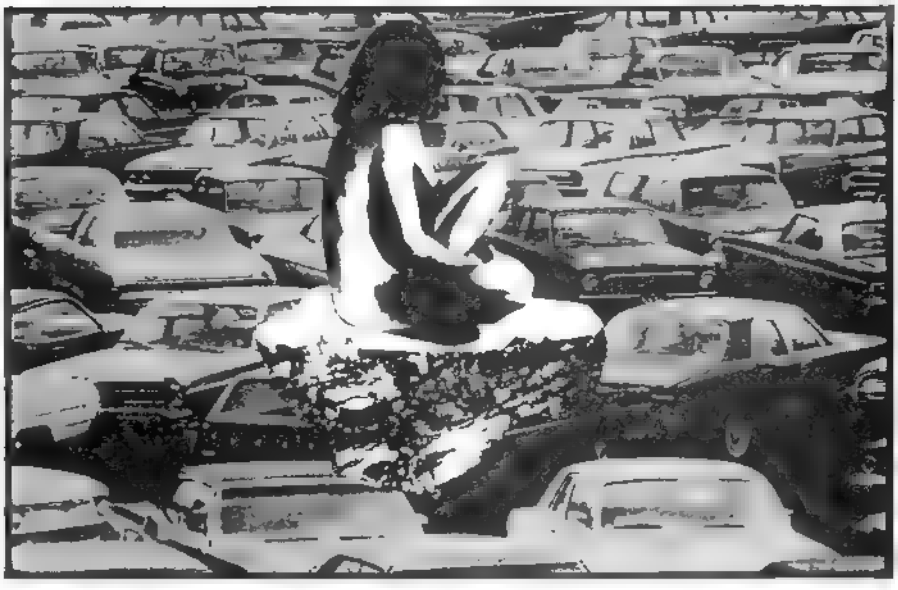


An
incessant
insomniac,
I kept my
dreams at a
minimum---and
then, only
at a distance
where I could
watch them
undisturbed
and make
notes.

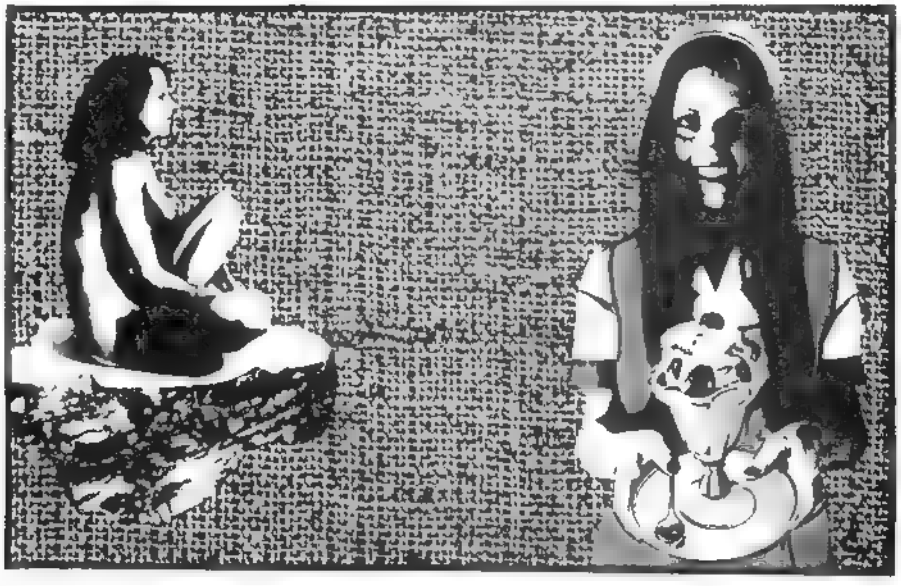
CONCEPT: Jeffrey Morgan/Ken Steacy PHOTOGRAPHS/TREATMENTS: Ken Steacy
TEXT: Jeffrey Morgan © 1978 Main Artery/Triskelion & Ken Steacy

I prided myself on those notes (with their careful calligraphied construction), and was prone to define myself in their lucid, nocturnal meanings.

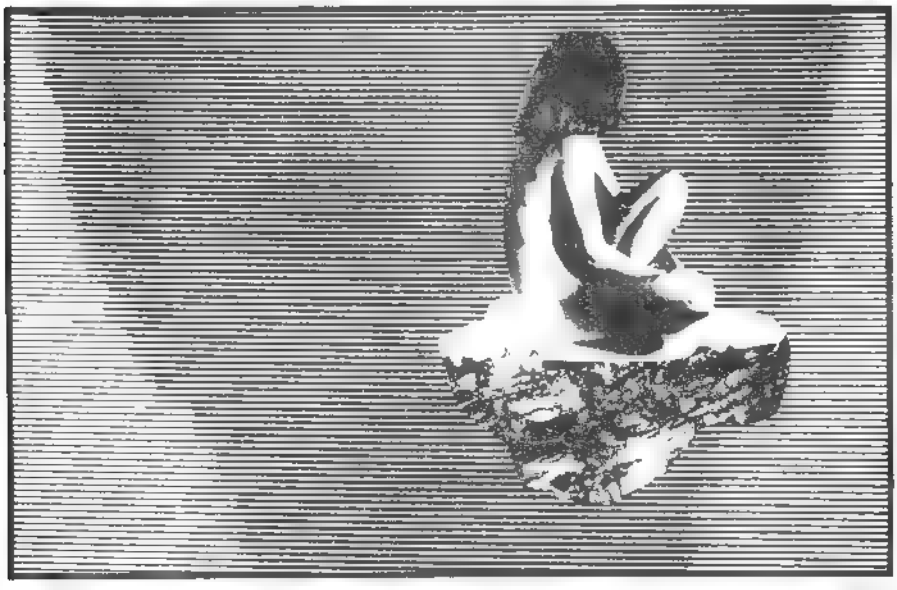
Cross indexing key symbols for future reference, I gave my life a reading unlike any other interpretation; semeiological, expressionistic or impressionistic.



Mine was mine alone.



One morning, upon consulting my notes for solutions, I found them to be vague, unspecific, cluttered; the stuff of dreams.



I saw all there was, and I see more.

ONE CANNOT LOOK INTO THE FUTURE, BUT ONE MAY MEDITATE UPON THE PAST, AND IN SO DOING, LIVE AGAIN.

SHAWN OF THE RUINS

AS A YOUNG BOY I DID AS OTHER BOYS DID.
YOU'VE BEEN A FINE STUDENT, SHAWN. I'LL HAVE NO REGRETS WHEN YOU ASSUME MY DUTIES AS HORTICULTURIST ON NEW CANADA.
C'MON JUD! YOU TALK AS IF THAT'LL BE TOMORROW!
WE'VE GOT FIVE YEARS BEFORE WE LAND.

Script GEORGE HENDERSON, Layouts GENE DAY, Finished Pencils + Inks JIM BEVERIDGE, Lettering BILL PAYNE
© Copyright 978 CONTROLLED CHAOS
Concepts + Creations Co-ordinated JAMES WALEY

I LEARNED MUCH FROM JUD, THE MAKER OF FOOD. HE WAS SOMEHOW DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER MEN.
YOU SEEM TROUBLED, SHAWN ANYTHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH?
NO NOT REALLY. BUT I WAS JUST WONDERING ...
...WHY WAS I THE ONLY BOY CHOSEN TO MAKE THE JOURNEY TO NEW CANADA? IT'S BEEN A YEAR SINCE BLAST OFF AND I MISS MY FRIENDS BACK ON EARTH!
THERE WAS THAT ABOUT JUD WHICH BOUND ME TO HIM. I EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO IMITATE HIS WAY.
DON'T DO AS I DO, DO AS I SAY. NOW, LET'S TRY THAT AGAIN. LEFT FOOT FORWARD...
SORRY ABOUT THAT!
I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE SURPRISE YOU PROMISED ME TOMORROW!
BUT THERE WERE TIMES HE WOULD DISAPPEAR FOR DAYS...FOR REASONS HE NEVER REVEALED! ONCE I SAW HIM GO OFF AND STEALTHILY FOLLOWED HIM
I DISAGREE! MARIA HAS REACHED PUBERTY SHAWN IS AT LEAST A YEAR BEHIND HER. IT'S TOO EARLY!
BULL! SHAWN MAY BE YOUNG BUT HE'S QUITE CAPABLE OF FUNCTIONING AS A MAN!
BUT CURIOSITY AND SURPRISE BETTERED CAUTION—AND JUD DISCOVERED ME AFTER A LONG CHASE HE CAUGHT ME AND THRASHED ME UNTIL THE BLOOD FLOWED
YOU LITTLE IDIOT! YOU'LL RUIN EVERYTHING!
BUT, JUD! WHO ARE THEY?
WHEN JUD ANSWERED MY QUESTION, I FOUND THE WORDS STRANGE TO MY EARS
SHAWN, THIS IS MARIA. YOU'LL BE SEEING A LOT OF EACH OTHER FROM NOW ON.

So it came about that, as far as might be, I became a man...
You're quite HANDSOME, you know.
Cut it out, will you! Just because we're ENGAGED doesn't mean you can PAW me.
As time went on, I found Jud accepted me as an equal.
What do YOU think, Shawn?
Looks good to me. What does the COMPUTER say about it?
The AIR'S breathable and there's minimal RADIATION, but we can't seem to get any LIFE READINGS.
I've got all the LIFE READINGS we need, medic says I'm CARRYING TWINS!
Then came the time of leaving
We've been told what to expect. Just think of NEW CANADA as being a GARDEN waiting to be TILLED and PLANTED.
But Jud's words were empty when met with the heat and drought of the planet
My God! No! Nooo!
Jud! It's impossible! B-but...
We're BACK on EARTH!
Not BACK, Shawn. WE NEVER LEFT! We've been ORBITING Earth for years waiting for the RADIATION to subside!

MY END WILL COME SOON.
THERE IN THE DISTANCE WHICH TIME MAKES, THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN—I AM HE. THAT FACT MUST NEVER LEAVE MY THOUGHTS.
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE WE'RE THE ONLY ONES LEFT.
SHUSH! IT'S ENOUGH THAT WE'RE ALIVE
THEN I, SHAWN OF THE RUINS, WAS TAUGHT THE MEANING OF FEAR.
FROM NOW ON WE'LL EACH CARRY ONE OF THESE!
YOU MEAN? ...
YES
...WE'VE PICKED UP LIFE READINGS! OF WHAT, I DON'T KNOW.
FEAR NOT ONLY OF THE BEASTS, BUT OF THE PROTECTORS, THE OTHERS WHO HAD JOURNEYED WITH US TO CANADA.
DO NOT PANIC! THE SURVIVORS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED AND OBSERVED. YOU WILL NOT BE HARMED IF YOU REMAIN UNDER OUR CONTROL!
UNDER YOUR CONTROL! BY WHOSE AUTHORITY? YOUR PRIME DIRECTIVE DOES NOT PERMIT DIRECT INTERFERENCE IN OUR AFFAIRS!
OUR PRIME DIRECTIVE CAN BE AMENDED TO COVER UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES! THE YOUNG ONES MUST BE PROTECTED!
YOU OLD ONES ARE BARREN... EXPENDABLE! IT'S BEST YOU GO YOUR OWN WAY.

THE LEAVING OF JUD AND HIS WOMAN SAT HEAVY ON MY HEART. THEY WERE AS BLOOD OF MY BLOOD, FLESH OF MY FLESH.
SHAWN! I'M FRIGHTENED! WHO'S GOING TO BE WITH ME DURING CHILDBIRTH?
DON'T TALK LIKE THAT! I'LL BE WITH YOU EVERY MINUTE OF THE WAY.
BUT THE SORROW IS FLEETING. I WAS AS ONE POSSESSED. I HAD JOINED WITH MY WOMAN AND THE FRUIT OF OUR LOVE WOULD BE HARVESTED.
IT WON'T BE MUCH LONGER. SEE! YOU CAN FEEL THEM KICKING!
DOES ...DOES IT HURT?
SILLY! OF COURSE IT HURTS! BUT IT'S BEAUTIFUL!
BUT THE HOUR OF LIFE GIVING WAS NOT TO BE A HAPPY ONE.
IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT YOU RETURN TO THE SHIP. YOU WILL COME WITH US NOW!
FIRST CAME HORROR...
RRRRRRRRRRRR-AAAA

AND THEN THE FINAL HORROR...
RRRAAATH!
SHAWN! IT'S TIME!
CONDITION RED! CONDITION RED! THE YOUNG ONES ARE IN JEOPARDY!
DO SOMETHING! GET US OUT OF HERE! SHE'S STARTING ...
TO GIVE BIRTH!
THE PROTECTORS PROCEEDED TO LIVE UP TO THEIR NAMES...DESTROYING THE RAIDING PARTY WITH COLD, HEARTLESS EFFICIENCY...
FASTER! FASTER!
THE ONLY CONCERN WAS FOR MARIA... AND OUR CHILDREN ...
IT GNAWS AT MY GUTS, THIS MEMORY.. THE PAIN ON MY LOVED ONE'S FACE!
OH, GOD! LET THEM BE ALIVE!
A PAIN I WOULD GLADLY HAVE SHARED...
MARIA!! DON'T LEAVE ME! PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME!!
AND WHEN SHE DIED, SO DIED I.
THE FEMALE HAS CEASED TO EXIST!

FROM THAT MOMENT ON, MY LIFE WAS EMPTY OF MEANING...
THEY ARE IMPERFECT. FLAWED. THEIR LIFE SPAN WILL BE SHORT. NOT MORE THAN ANOTHER OF YOUR DAYS
IT'S...IT'S A NIGHTMARE. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENING TO ME!
BUT I CONTINUED TO LIVE, EVEN AS BEFORE
THE FLOWERS ARE FOR THE GRAVES. LEAVE THE VEGETABLES BEHIND THE HOUSE. .
I'LL DO THE PLANTING MYSELF!
FOR ONE CANNOT DIE UNTIL HE'S LIVED EACH OF HIS DAYS ONE BY ONE.
WILL YOU BLOODY IDIOTS GET LOST.' IF I'VE TOLD YOU ONCE I'VE TOLD YOU A THOUSAND TIMES...
JUD
JOAN
...I DON'T WANT YOU TO PROTECT ME!
MARIA
AND LIVE THEM I DID. THOUGH SOME WOULD SAY I WAS MAD.
HEY! BEASTIES! COME AND GET ME!
STOP! YOU ARE THE LAST.' WE MUST PROTECT YOU!
WHAT'S WRONG, BUSTER?
ARE YOU BEGINNING TO FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING USELESS?
WE...MUST SERVE ...

I LOOK BACK INTO THE PAST AS INTO A FAR DISTANCE.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THEM? IT'S AS IF THEY'VE DIED STANDING UP! WELL?
THEY...HAVE... CEASED... TO... FUNCTION...
032
I AM A CRACKED CUP...
...A DISCARDED GARMENT..
...A BROKEN WEAPON.
MY PEOPLE HAVE GONE. YOU HAVE INHERITED THE EARTH.
I WAIT CALMLY FOR THE END.

COMPUTER READOUT AG14... OCTOBER 12, 1998 ... CONTINUE TEST FLIGHT PATTERN... PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS MADE... ORBITAL PROCEDURES CHECKED THRU COMPUTER CHANNEL RG4.. LUNAR ORBIT ON PROPER CO-ORDINATES... LISTINS MADE THRU COMPUTER CHANNEL RG9...
YOU WANNA CHECK THOSE CO-ORDINATES STEVE?
RIGHT-O, THEY SEEM TO WORK OUT...
COMPUTER CHANNELS OPEN, BOB, AUDIO SWITCH IN PREPARATION!
GET SET FOR RADIO CUT OFF GUYS.. FOUR MINUTES.
HEY STEVE SWITCH AUDIO TO MANUAL SHUT OFF
CHECK.
RADIO SILENCE IN 2 MINUTES, BOYS LETS BREAK OUT THE PARTY HATS AND THE BOOZE...
OKAY YOU JOKERS, CUT THE CLOWNING. YOU WANNA SEND OUT CO-ORDINATE READINGS A-GAE, SOME BOZO MISSED THEM LAST TIME...
RADIO CUT OFF IN ONE MINUTE, FELLAS, SOUND SIGNAL WEAKENING..
WE RE USING MANUAL CUT-OFF IN TEN SECONDS HEAR FROM YOU GUYS LATER...
CHECK-- RADIO TRANSMISSION TERMINATED...

HEY BOB: SOMETHING ON RADAR!
TOO BIG TO BE ANOTHER CRAFT! LET'S SIT TIGHT, WE'LL BE ABLE TO SEE IT IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES.
...OH MY GOD! MIKE ... STEVE ... LOOK AT THIS!
THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON!
LITTLE DID BOB MASTERS... MIKE CHALLENGER AND STEVE CHANDLER REALIZE THAT THIS DAY WOULD BE A TURNING POINT IN THEIR LIVES... A CALL TO ADVENTURE... NEW EXPERIENCES... NEW UNDERSTANDING... BUT WHEN, OHMM STRANGER, THINGS HAVE HAPPENED OH...
IT ... IT'S ANOTHER PLANET!
THIS CAN'T BE REAL... IT MUST BE SOME SORT OF SPACE MIRAGE!
I CAN'T SEE WHY MISSION CONTROL DIDN'T PICK IT UP... ACCORDING TO OUR SENSORS, ITS REAL ALLRIGHT...
TOO BAD WE CAN'T RADIO EARTH ABOUT THIS... WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL WE'RE BACK IN VIEW... WHAT SHALL WE DO BOB?

WHAT THE HELL! THE FLASH GORDON IN ME SAYS: "LET'S LAND!" ITS PROBABLY ALL A DREAM ANYWAY!
SHORTLY...
SENSORS INDICATE THAT THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE HAS A SIMILAR COMPOSITION TO EARTH'S. .JUST SLIGHTLY MORE OXYGEN!
GREAT! WE DON'T HAVE TO WEAR OUR SPACE GEAR!
AS THE TRIO LAND UPON A CLEARING, THEY ARE GREETED BY A SIGHT THAT LEAVES THEM BREATHLESS...
AMAZING! ITS JUST LIKE EARTH... EVEN BETTER! SO FRESH AND NEW... SO UNSPOILED!
ITS A BLASTED PARADISE IS WHAT IT IS!

I USED TO DREAM ABOUT PLACES LIKE THIS WHEN I WAS A KID! LETS DO SOME EXPLORING, GUYS!
WE'LL STOP HERE A BIT MIKE, SO YOU CAN GET SOME READINGS.
RIGHT! TIME TO GET OUT THE OL' 'TRI-CORDER.'
ACCORDING TO THE SENSORS, ALL THE 'PROPER ELEMENTS' ARE HERE.. AND IF THIS PLANET'S EVOLUTION IS IN ANY WAY SIMILAR TO EARTH'S..
SO THERE IS A POSSIBILITY OF 'INTELLIGENT LIFE' HERE...
BUT UNKNOWN TO THE ASTRONAUTS, THEIR ARRIVAL HAD NOT GONE TOTALLY UNNOTICED...
AND SOON, THE FOREST COMES ALIVE WITH NEWS OF THE STRANGE NEW INTRUDERS...

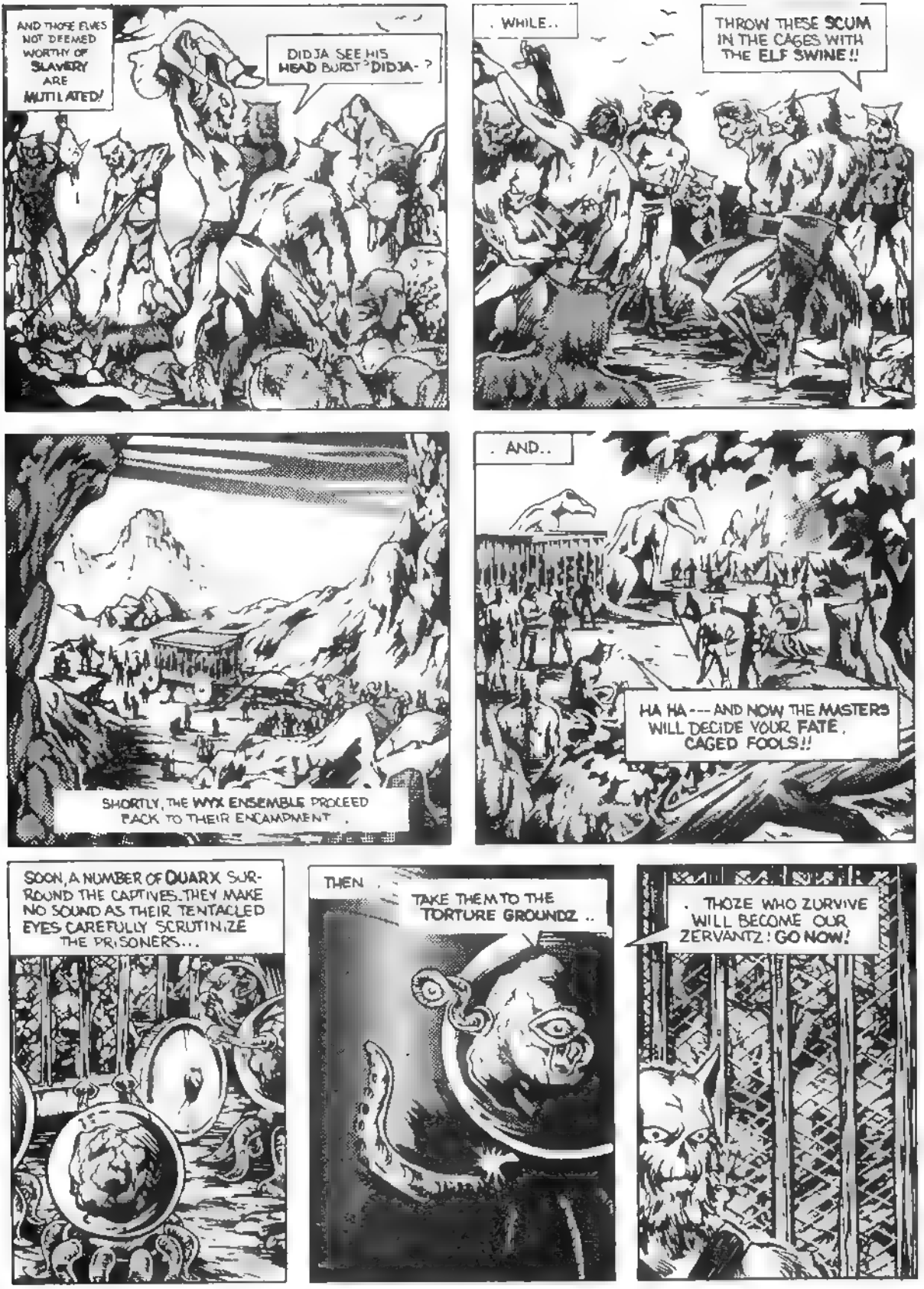
AND SPREADS QUICKLY..
...FROM OUTPOST
RIGHT, WE'LL CHECK IT OUT!
. TO OUTPOST
SUDDENLY...
HOLD IT, GUYS! SOMETHING MOVING IN THAT BUSH--
.THE ATTACK! STRANGE, HIDEOUS MAN WOLVES, THE LIKES OF WHICH THE HAPLESS ASTRONAUTS HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE! THEIR ATTACK IS SWIFT; ANIMAL-LIKE..
YAARRG!
GAAAA!
UHH!!
STEVE!

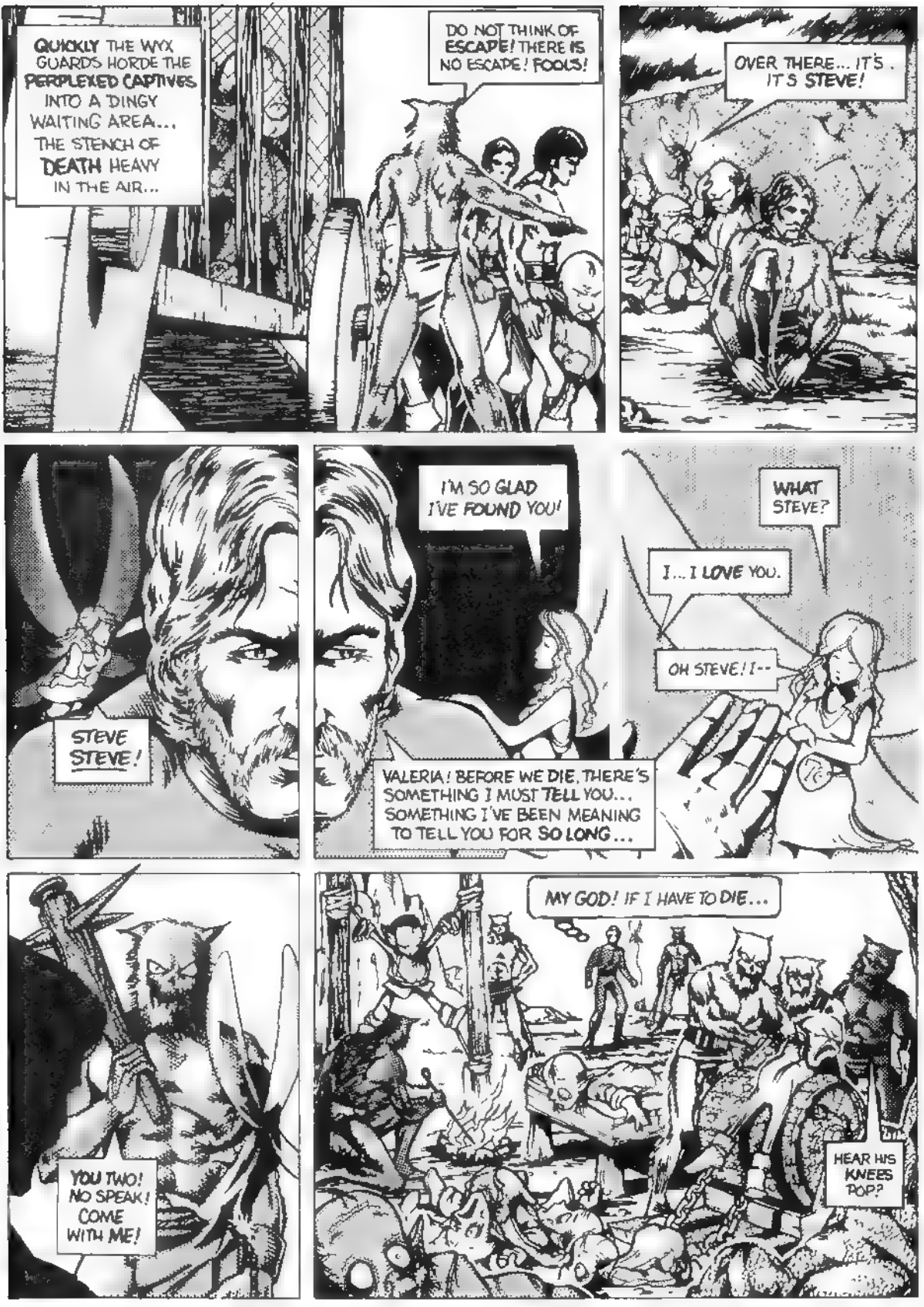
JUST THEN--
YAHOOEY!
VARP LOADERS ON 'QUICK BURN' BOYS! IT'S WYX OBLITERATIN' TIME!
KISS MY LASER MUTANT!
VLZT!
EAT DEATH BLACK WYX DOG!
FRAK!
FROM OUT OF THE SKIES THEY CAME, SWOOPING DRAGON FLY-LIKE AIRCRAFT, CARRYING DIMINUTIVE PILOTS; ARMED WITH A VERITABLE ARSENAL OF WEAPONS. THE ELFIN RIDERS HANDLED THEIR VESSELS LIKE COWBOYS IN A RODEO, DODGING AND OUTMANEUVERING THE CREATURES ON THE GROUND, ALL THE WHILE SHOUTING THEIR CURSES AND INSULTS. THE TINY HARBINGERS OF DEATH MADE SHORT WORK OF THEIR BAFFLED OPPONENTS.
YOU GET SECONDS, FREEKO!
ZARP! ZARP! ZARP!
GUNG FU-

ALLRIGHT MATES! IMPLEMENT 'CLEANUP PROCEDURE #15. AND WE CAN CALL IT A 'DAY.'
THANK YOU. YOU SAVED OUR LIVES! WHO—
- RIGHT NOW, FROM THE LOOKS OF THAT WOUND WE'D BETTER TAKE YOUR FRIEND HERE BACK TO CAMP.
I DUNNO, YA BETTER PLUG 'IM AGAIN!
AS FOR ME, THE NAME'S KOPPERNOSE, CAPT. "KAPP" KOPPERNOSE OF HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL AIR-GNATS. YOU CAN CALL ME "KAPP". WELL, ENOUGH OF THE SOCIALIZING, CLIMB ABOARD.
LATER, AS THEY ENTER CAMP...
...FUNNY, THEY SPEAK PERFECT ENGLISH. INTERESTING...
OKAY STEVE, THEY CALL YA STEVE, DON'T THEY, WELL HAVE YA FIXED UP IN NO TIME.
TAKE THIS ONE TO THE INFIRMARY QUICKLY.
YOU TWO COME WITH ME! YOUR FRIEND WILL BE WELL TAKEN CARE OF.
AND, AT THE INFIRMARY...
THERE! THAT'S QUITE A NASTY GASH THEY GAVE YOU. IT'S ALL CLEANED AND DRESSED AND SHOULD HEAL QUICKLY..
...THAT IS, OF COURSE IF YOU KEEP THAT ARM STILL FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS...
SEE YOU LATER, ON MY NEXT ROUNDS.

NOT TOO MUCH LATER I HOPE...
TEE HEE HEE
MEANWHILE...
...AND WE BROUGHT THEM DIRECTLY TO YOU, MY LORD!
THANK YOU CAPT. KOPPERNOSE YOU MAY GO NOW.
WELL GENTLEMEN, IT SEEMS YOU ARE VERY LUCKY INDEED; FOR HAD OUR TROOPS BEEN A SECOND LATER, YOU WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ALIVE TO TELL THE TALE! OH YES MY NAME IS OALDWUNN, MILITARY AND SPIRITUAL LEADER OF THIS SQUADRON OF THE ROYAL AIR GNATS OF KING VOYDD IMPERIAL RULER OF THE KINGDOM OF ONO AND ALL TERRITORIES. AS FOR YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT 'JUST WHAT'S GOING ON', I SHALL ATTEMPT TO ENLIGHTEN YOU...
WHAT YOU WITNESSED EARLIER, IS MERELY THE MINUTEST EXAMPLE OF THE DEATH, DESTRUCTION AND CARNAGE WHICH HAS TORN MY HOMELAND APART FOR CENTURIES! YOU SEE, ONO HAS BEEN AT WAR WITH A MOST ELUSIVE ENEMY! HE IS KNOWN AS THE DREADED 'SORCERER OF THE WIND'; OF WHOM VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN, EXCEPT THAT, HE WANTS ONO FOR HIMSELF!! AT THE PRESENT TIME, HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN CONQUERING...
NEARLY ALL OF THE FOREST LAND SURROUNDING OUR BE-LOVED CITY OF RUBICON THE VERY HEART AND SOUL OF ONONIAN CIVILIZATION AS WE KNOW IT! IF SHE SHOULD FALL, THE ENTIRE KINGDOM, INCLUDING THE TERRITORIES WILL FOLLOW QUICKLY! AS FOR THAT BAND OF MINDLESS RENEGADES WHO ATTACKED YOO EARLIER ON...
...THEY ARE THE SORCER OWN PRIVATE ARMY KNO AS 'WYX'. IT IS NOT KNOWN WHERE THEY ARE FROM, BUT IT IS THOUGHT THEY ARE THE VILE SPAWN OF THE SORCERERS INFECTED MIND ITSELF! OUR OWN WISEMEN HAVE TRIED F CENTURIES TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF THIS 'PERPETUAL ENEMY', BUT TO NO AVAIL...

ANYWAY, I'M TOO OLD FOR THIS SORT OF THING! WE'LL BE MOVING ON TO RUBICON IN A FEW DAYS. I'M SURE THE KING WILL BE MOST INTERESTED TO MEET YOU...
I STILL THINK WE'RE IN A DREAM.
DAYS LATER...
HEY VALERIA, I HEAR THE GNOMES ARE HAVING A BASH TONIGHT! WANNA BOOGIE?
OH STEVE! YOU—
AAAAAARRG!
OH MY!
WHAT TH—!
FROM OUT OF NOWHERE THEY CAME; THE RAMPAGING WYX HORDES ON THEIR MONSTROUS LIZARD-DOGS - TAKING THE SURPRISED ELF PLATOON TOTALLY OFF GUARD...
KILL! KILL! KILL!
YAAAAAAAAG!
GAAA!
GNYAAARG!
WYX RAID! WYX RAID!!


AND THOSE ELVES NOT DEEMED WORTHY OF SLAVERY ARE MUTILATED!
DIDJA SEE HIS HEAD BURST ? DIDJA- ?
. WHILE..
THROW THESE SCUM IN THE CAGES WITH THE ELF SWINE !!
SHORTLY, THE WYX ENSEMBLE PROCEED BACK TO THEIR ENCAMPMENT .
. AND..
HA HA --- AND NOW THE MASTERS WILL DECIDE YOUR FATE, CAGED FOOLS!!
SOON, A NUMBER OF QUARX SURROUND THE CAPTIVES. THEY MAKE NO SOUND AS THEIR TENTACLED EYES CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZE THE PRISONERS...
THEN
TAKE THEM TO THE TORTURE GROUNDZ ..
. THOZE WHO ZURVIVE WILL BECOME OUR ZERVANTZ ! GO NOW!

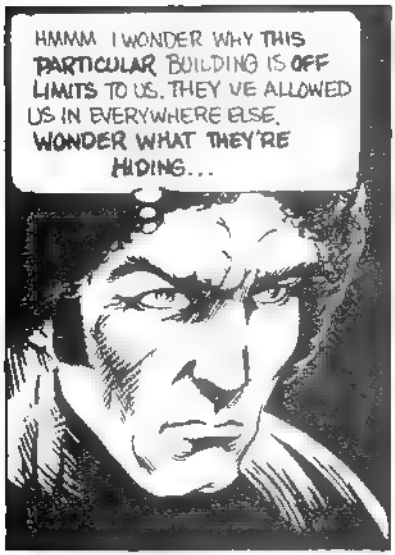

QUICKLY THE WYX GUARDS HORDE THE PERPLEXED CAPTIVES INTO A DINGY WAITING AREA... THE STENCH OF DEATH HEAVY IN THE AIR...
DO NOT THINK OF ESCAPE! THERE IS NO ESCAPE! FOOLS!
OVER THERE... IT'S . IT'S STEVE!
STEVE STEVE!
I'M SO GLAD I'VE FOUND YOU!
VALERIA! BEFORE WE DIE, THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU... SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU FOR SO LONG...
WHAT STEVE?
I... I LOVE YOU.
OH STEVE! I--
YOU TWO! NO SPEAK! COME WITH ME!
MY GOD! IF I HAVE TO DIE...
HEAR HIS KNEES POP?

I'LL DIE FIGHTING!
BOP!
FOR THAT I'LL RIP YOUR GUTS OUT MYSELF!
KRAK!
URK!
AT THAT MOMENT AN UNEXPECTED RESCUE PARTY POUNCES UPON THE BEWILDERED WYX ENCAMPMENT! SWIFT ELF HORSEMEN SCREAMING LIKE MADMEN, SQUADRONS OF AIR GNATS AND ELEPHANTINE HEAVY ARTILLERY CARRIERS.
DIE, DEMON!
WOO-HA!
MOVE IN LIKE LOCUST!
FTOOM! FTOOM!
KSHOW!
KATOOM!

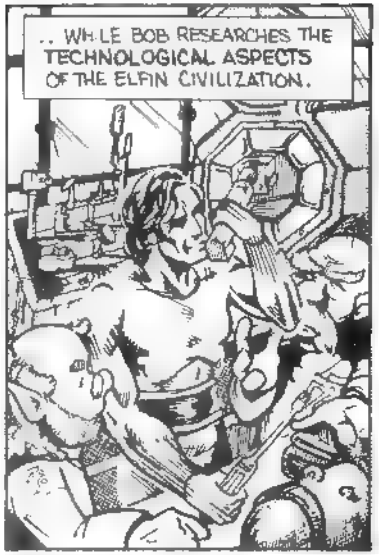
THE ELF TROOPS SWARM OVER THE WYX ENCAMPMENT AND EFFICIENTLY FINISH THEM OFF TO THE LAST!
Blam! Blam!
Blam! Blam! Blam!
SOON 'RESCUE PROCEDURE' IS UNDERWAY...
OKAY, EVERYBODY, INTO THE TRANSPORTS TO RUBICON ONE AT A TIME! YOU THREE, COME THIS WAY..
VALERIA: WHY SO SAD?
I OH STEVE!
WHEN YOU REACH THE CITY PLEASE BE CAREFUL, AND ABOVE ALL BEWARE OF CREETO! AND STEVE I WANT YOU TO HAVE THIS MY ONONIAN BUCKLE IT IS THE ONLY THING OF VALUE I HAVE TO GIVE YOU...
BUT VALERIA--
FAREWEL, MY LOVE.
AND SO BOB, MIKE AND STEVE ARE FLOWN ON AHEAD TO THE CITY...
SAY WHAT ARE THESE NAPKINS I FOUND ON THE SEAT FOR?
OH THOSE ARE YOUR PARACHUTES, WE COULDN'T FIND ANY BIGGER ONES

FINALLY, BOB, MIKE AND STEVE HAD REACHED RUBICON;
"THE VERY HEART AND SOUL OF ONONIAN CULTURE"
AS CALDWELL ON THE PLANET HAD SAID OF RUBICON.
A BIZARRE CITY INDEED! BOB COULD NOT HELP BUT
NOTICE THAT THE GENERAL POPULACE STILL USED
HORSES AS THE MAIN MODE OF TRANSPORTATION.
WHILE ABOVE IN THE SKIES WERE A FANTASTIC
ARRAY OF MECHANICAL AIR CRAFT DESIGNED TO RE-
SEMBLE VARIOUS BIRDS AND INSECTS. A PECULIAR
SYNTHESIS OF TECHNOLOGY AND PRIMITIVE SIMPLICITY..

THEN IN THE GREAT PALACE OF KING VOYDD, THE ASTRONAUTS COME UPON AN EVEN STRANGER SCENE...
HI! HI! HI!
NOT YET YOUR MAJESTY!
BOB STEVE. CHECK THIS OUT, WILL YA?
HI! HI! HI!
HI!
HI!
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE HIS MAJESTY, HE HASN'T BEEN WELL LATELY!
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I AM CREETO HUMBLE AID AND ADVISER TO KING VOYDD OF ONO. I HAVE HEARD MUCH OF YOU AND I THAT IS WE HAVE BEEN LONGING TO MEET YOU! BY THE WAY WE HAVE LOCATED YOUR SPACECRAFT, AND OUR SCIENTISTS ARE READYING IT AT THIS VERY MOMENT FOR YOUR 'DEPARTURE'. BUT I AM SURE YOU ARE WEARY FROM YOUR LONG JOURNEY..
HI!
OH GUARD SEE TO IT THAT OUR GUESTS RECIEVE PROPER TREATMENT. AND DO SHOW THEM OUR FAIR CITY BEFORE THEY LEAVE US. OH YES AND MAKE SURE THEY HAVE ENOUGH COMPANY DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
HI!
YES MY LORD!
HI!
AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED I SEEMED THEIR 'COMPANY' WAS EVERYWHERE.
HEY GUYS! LET'S TAKE A LOOK IN~
STOP! OR YOU WILL BE SHOT WHERE YOU STAND!!
ADMITTANCE IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN! COME WE LOOK AT OUR BEAUTIFUL MARKETSQUARE!

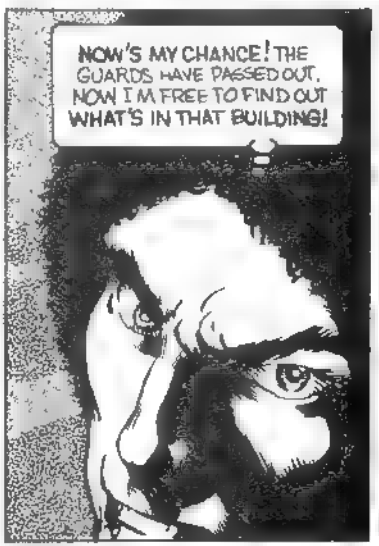

HMMM I WONDER WHY THIS PARTICULAR BUILDING IS OFF LIMITS TO US. THEY'VE ALLOWED US IN EVERYWHERE ELSE. WONDER WHAT THEY'RE HIDING...

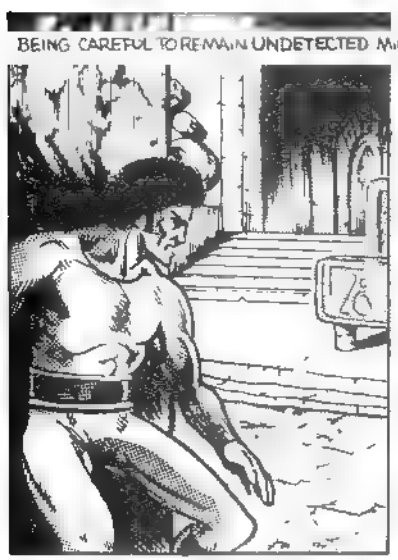
THE DAYS PASS. STEVE STUDIES ONONIAN CULTURE.
SUBJECT IN SECTOR 3

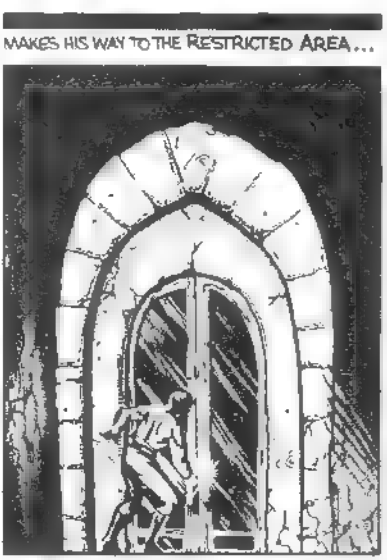

.. WHILE BOB RESEARCHES THE TECHNOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE ELFIN CIVILIZATION.

AS FOR MIKE...
GREAT IDEA MIKE! NOTHIN LIKE QUAFFIN A FEW BREW! GOTTA WARN YA THOUGH YER DRINKIN WITH THE KING'S GUARDS!
KLUNK
ARRRR MATE!

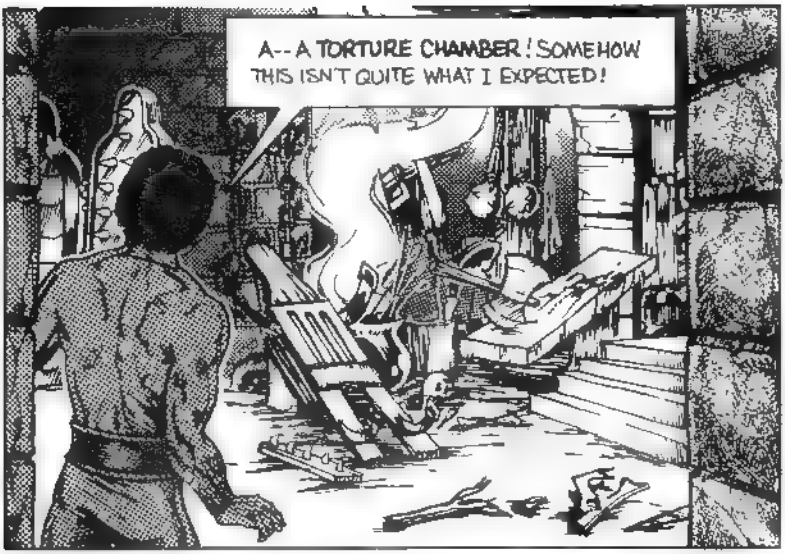
YESHIREE... YER DRINKIN' WIT' DA KINGSH DA KINGSH.
THE KING'S GUARDS!
FINALLY!
ARRRRR-BURP!


NOW'S MY CHANCE! THE GUARDS HAVE PASSED OUT. NOW I'M FREE TO FIND OUT WHAT'S IN THAT BUILDING!


BEING CAREFUL TO REMAIN UNDETECTED MIKE MAKES HIS WAY TO THE RESTRICTED AREA...



GOOD LORD!


A--A TORTURE CHAMBER! SOMEHOW THIS ISN'T QUITE WHAT I EXPECTED!

AAAAAAAAAA!
WHA--

WHY IT'S A-- A WYX!
NOT YET MY FRIEND, I WAS LIKE YOU ONCE..

..I COME FROM THE LAND BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS, WHERE ALL WAS PEACE AND HARMONY; UNTIL THE ACCURSED SORCERER OF THE WIND CAME AND CONQUERED ALL.
AND NOW, WITH HIS ALLIES HERE IN RUBICON, LED BY THAT DAMNED MAD DWARF, CREETO, HE USES MY COUNTRYMEN TO FURTHER HIS PLANS FOR TOTAL CONQUEST OF ONO BY TRANSFORMING US INTO THE MONSTROUS ENTITY THAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU...

AAAAAH! AS EACH SECOND PASSES, I BECOME MORE MONSTER THAN MAN! URRR! THE DESIRE TO KILL ...DESTROY ...TO MUTILATE... IS CLOUDING MY MIND... AAAAG!
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

I AM BEYOND ALL HELP MY FRIEND! GRRRRR! SAVE YOURSELF, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE! SAVE YOURSELF..

THIS IS REALLY HEAVY! I'VE GOT TO WARN THE OTHERS!

QUICKLY MIKE MAKES HIS WAY BACK TO HIS COMRADES TO TELL THEM OF HIS STARTLING DISCOVERY!
BOB! STEVE! I'VE JUST BEEN TO THAT BUILDING! THE ONE WE WERE TOLD TO STAY OUT OF! IT'S LIKE--LIKE A TORTURE CHAMBER INSIDE... AND MEN CHANGING INTO WYX! THE ELVES--THEY'RE CREATING THEM! WE'RE NEXT!
WAIT A MINUTE! SLOW DOWN THERE FELLA! WHAT'RE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT?!
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DRINK ING WITH THOSE GUARDS OL' CHUM, BUT YOU REALLY DON'T EXPECT US TO BELIEVE--
TAP TAP TAP
TAP TAP TAP
--VALERIA!
MY LOVE! IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN! HOW DID YOU--?
THERE'S NO TIME FOR CONSVERSATION NOW STEVE! YOU'RE ALL IN GRAVE DANGER!
CREETO AND HIS GUARDS! THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY HERE THIS VERY MINUTE! THEY KNOW THAT MIKE HAS BEEN TO THE FORBIDDEN BUILDING! WE'LL ALL BE SHOT ON SIGHT! YOUR SPACECRAFT IS IN THE IMPERIAL COURTYARD! YOU MUST ESCAPE! NOW!
THUNK!
SOMEONE AT THE DOOR!
OOF!
IDIOT!
IT'S CREETO! GO QUICKLY!
CRASH!

'SHOOT THE TRAITOROUS WENCH FIRST!'
VALERIA!
BRAK! BRAK! BRAK!
TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE GUARDS' MOMENTARY CLUMSINESS, BOB MIKE AND STEVE MAKE THEIR ESCAPE...
FOOLS! MINDLESS DOLTS! GET THEM OR I'LL HAVE YOUR EARS GROUND DOWN TO YOUR EMPTY SKULLS!!
GLIK!
YES MY LORD!
OOF!
THROUGH THE WINDING STREETS OF RUBICON RUN THE THREE ASTRONAUTS, WITH CREETO'S DEATH-DEALING HENCHMEN IN HOT PURSUIT ALL THE WAY!
I'LL BE BACK, VALERIA--
BACK TO AVENGE YOUR DEATH!
LOOK! THERE'S THE SHIP! LET'S GO!!

OKAY MIKE, YOU AND STEVE READY?!
ALL SYSTEMS CHECK!
THEN LET'S--
--GO!
BRAKA! BRAKA!
BRAKA! BRAKA! BRAK!!
PTOOM! PTOOM!
WE MADE IT! WE'RE OUT OF THAT INSANE PLACE!
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT WAS REAL HALF THE TIME! LITTLE ELVES WITH POINTED EARS; FAIRIES WITH TRANSPARENT WINGS; IT JUST HAD TO BE A DREAM!
IT WAS REAL...
...VERY REAL.
FINI

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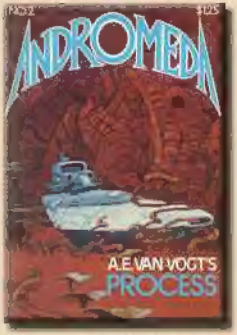

Sir Real's

UNDERGROUND COMIX CLASSIX

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23 - Shawn Of The Ruins
31 - The Dark Side Of The Moon

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